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CHRISTIAN REALITY IN MODERN LIGHT

F. BALLARD
D.D.

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CHRISTIAN REALITY IN MODERN LIGHT

BY

FRANK BALLARD

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UXORI OPTIMAE,
MATRI CARISSIMAE,
CHRISTIANAE VERISSIMAE.

PREFACE

It is to be feared that both the learned and the unlearned will be disappointed in the treatment the following pages accord to the theme announced. Doubtless the philosopher and rustic alike appreciate reality; but each does so only from his own standpoint. The former will probably deem the considerations here offered far too simple, whilst the latter will object that they are much too abstruse. It is not, however, necessary that either of them should be satisfied. Those who desire to know what 'reality' stands for in metaphysics, may find it in such pages as those of Mr. F. H. Bradley. Therefrom, with all the endorsement of several editions, we learn, after more than five hundred pages of close discussion concerning 'Appearance and Reality,' that—

> Our conclusion in brief has explained and has confirmed the irresistible impression that all is beyond us. . . . There is no reality at all, anywhere, except in appearance; and in our appearance we can discover the main nature of reality. . . . It costs little to find that in the end Reality is inscrutable. It is easy to perceive that any appearance, not being the Reality, in a sense is fallacious. The positive relation of every Appearance as an adjective to Reality, and the presence of Reality among its Appearances, in different degrees and with diverse values—this double truth we have found to be the centre of philosophy.

The average man or woman, even in this enlightened age, may be forgiven if they shrink from wandering in labyrinthine verbal mazes which promise no other reward than this for such a costly quest.

On the other hand, when the pious rustic, or his city compeer, is impregnably content to insist upon the reality of his own experience, and assume that the lustiness with which he sings—

> Should all the forms that men devise
> Assault my faith with treacherous art,
> I'd call them vanity and lies,
> And bind Thy Gospel to my heart,

is a sufficient demonstration of the validity of Christian beliefs for the whole world, the philosopher —who is really much more sensible than the rustic thinks—may be also forgiven for regarding such a one as not merely irrational but dangerous.

It is to be hoped that there is some rational *via media* between obscurantism and metaphysics. Surely we may believe that 'common sense' has been, after all, more educated than asphyxiated by the developments of modern knowledge. Certainly it stands for the realm in which ninety-nine out of every hundred human beings live and move. If there be any reality in any Gospel for any one, these are they who need it most; who desire it most; who appreciate it most—when such reality is made plain. It is for these, therefore, that the following attempt is made, and to them its appeal is addressed. This does not mean that it is concerned only, or even mainly, with the 'proletariat,' or

the 'submerged tenth,' or the 'lower classes,' or social 'broken earthenware.' The modern democracy, which needs all the best that Christianity can give it, includes far more than these. The vast majority of our fellow men to-day are—to use the language of the parable—neither sheep nor goats. Sinners indeed, in Christian parlance, they may be. But they are not drunkards or hooligans; they are not wastrels, or prodigals, or murderers, or robbers. They are easily misjudged superficially, as being 'indifferent,' 'pleasure-seeking,' 'careless,' 'selfish,' and the like. Whatever measure of truth may sometimes lie in these accusings, it is more than probable that the estimate of Jesus in regard to the lesser crowds of His day, is even truer as to the vaster multitudes of the present age.

> But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd.

Even before the frightful calamity with which for evermore the year 1914 will be associated, the condition of things amidst the teeming populations of Europe, was becoming such as to illustrate on an enormous and vivid scale the pitifulness which moved the heart of Jesus. The tragic human need of guidance, comfort, hope, to make even this life worth living, had become so manifest as to modify, alike beyond measure or resistance, the former Christian emphasis upon sin. Preaching in general has become milder, gentler, less fierce in denunciation, more tender in appeal. There are those, we know, who regard this indubitable change as a

'down-grade' tendency. They would urge more threats of 'eternal torment,' as the surest way to bring about Christian revival. But there is no risk in saying that the instinct herein of the Christian Church as a whole is divinely guided. The 'Gospel preaching' of this day is far nearer the mind of the Master than ever before.

How deeply, tragically, terribly, this human cry for comfort, guidance, and hope, is being intensified by the horrors and miseries of the unprecedented War which now is cursing Europe, there is no need to point out. It is all as plain, alas, as was the Plague of 1666. The question of the future for Christianity is whether it can, or cannot, meet this complex, pathetic, growing sense of human need. Amongst a far greater number than is acknowledged by the Churches, there is spreading an uneasy feeling as to the unreality of Christianity. It is partly intellectual, through serious changes in the mental outlook which have been resistlessly brought about by the developments of science and history. It is partly practical, through the apparent failure of Christianity to bring to pass during times of peace the greatest happiness of the greatest number; or to prevent that too-oft-recurring outbreak of human passion which we call 'war.' But it is as fatuous to deny or ignore this sense of uneasiness, as to think that it will be met by proclaiming a great spiritual revival 'at hand,' along with reiterated appeals for evangelical zeal. Rather must it be truthfully diagnosed, and rationally met, as the whole New Testament exemplifies. That is, however, to say very much in little. So much, indeed, that in the vast field suggested, as in the

realm of science, all that one man can do, be he ever so diligent and sincere, is to make a modest contribution. No more than that is claimed for the following pages. Less than that it is hoped they will not provide. For the desire to contribute something, even though it be but little, to the demonstration or confirmation of the reality of the good news which has come to humanity in Jesus Christ, is an aim which makes this life worth living, and the life to come worth anticipating.

I am well aware that some readers will regard the number of quotations from other writers—and perhaps especially from one source to which elsewhere I have often directed attention—as excessive. I can only say, by way of apology, that (i.) It is definitely reassuring to me to find my own convictions shared by other and abler men. (ii.) It seems to me very desirable that the views of leading thinkers should thus be made known to many readers who have not otherwise time or opportunity to consult them. (iii.) The purpose of these pages is not to display originality, but to make a plain protest against certain anti-Christian assumptions and assertions, as well as formulate a plea for a truer, broader, and more modern conception of Christian foundations. For both these purposes the avowals of acknowledged leaders and scholars are most desirable. (iv.) That which I am concerned about, above all else, is what is true. Beside that, literary reputation is a trifle. If the words of others will express the truth better than my own, I shall esteem it sufficient reward to have been the channel in some humble measure of conveying them to the modern world.

Unless otherwise stated, all Biblical quotations on these pages are taken from the original, for the sake of perspicuity in modern speech.

Whilst these words are being written, our world is passing through times in which it is all too easy to lose hope, and difficult indeed to find it again. But the main purpose of the following pages, however imperfectly achieved, is to show that the Christian hope rests upon reality, and therefore can never be finally lost. So that even now, though it seems as if hell had been let loose on earth, and that the rising tide of good for which so many of humanity's best have been hoping, praying, working, looking, trusting—call it the Coming of Christ, the Millennium, the Golden Age, the Better Day, or what we will—was being dismally driven back by the forces of ill, yet the inspiration of Clough's vision remains for all to whom Christ is real:—

> For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
> Seem here no painful inch to gain,
> Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
> Comes silent, flooding in, the main.
>
> And not by eastern windows only,
> When daylight comes, comes in the light.
> In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
> But westward, look, the land is bright.

The prayer of these chapters is 'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.'

F. B.

Sheffield,
March, 1916.

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'WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE'

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

In order to attain to any existence worth having, we must bear in mind that truth, reality, God, are real things existing quite independently of our individual life and private opinions; and an opinion is no less private if it happens to be shared by the whole human race. The type of all false religion is to believe what we will to believe, instead of what we have ascertained to be true; supposing that reality must be such as to satisfy our desires, and if not—go to, let us alter it.—R. G. COLLINGWOOD, in *Concerning Prayer*, p. 474.

Everything that lives must develop, and development means such modification of the organism as shall adapt it to its ever-changing environment. If the adaptation is good, the vital principle will gain an added life; if clumsy, it will just maintain its life until it can put forth a better; but if it can put forth no new modification to meet the changing environment, it dies. Christian theology is no exception to this universal principle; and inasmuch as belief cannot exist without some attempt to justify and express itself in intellectual categories, the Christian Church must and will find new ways of expressing to itself and others the meaning of its faith.—CANON STREETER, in *Concerning Prayer*, p. 35.

The primary and central feature of the Gospel was the religious and ethical revelation of God the Father, not any hectic apocalyptic hopes.

This analogy would suggest that certain forms and details of the early Christian eschatology belong to a view of the world which has been outgrown, and that therefore they possess but an historical interest for the Christian mind of to-day, which sincerely desires to be in touch with all that is vital in the religion of Jesus. The assurance of God's fatherly love and power, from which the eschatology of the Gospels really sprang, remains unimpaired; its value is permanent and timeless. For that, Jesus stands as guarantee, and without that there would be no religion worth associating with His name.—DR. MOFFATT, in *Religion and the Modern World*, pp. 221, 222.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

To prevent disappointment whilst endeavouring to make the most of the opportunity here presented, it is necessary to note clearly at the outset certain limitations. Reality, as a whole, may be truly likened to a well-cut diamond, in that it has many facets, i.e. many phases, each of which gives forth its own ray of colour as a contribution to a complex and wondrous whole. That whole is not here under consideration. It would require far abler hands. Only one phase of it comes within the present inquiry, viz. Christian reality. What that involves, how it is to be apprehended, how estimated, how not only maintained but developed, will be more than sufficient for our most earnest thought.

It is not even religious reality which here concerns us. Such a theme, thanks to our greatly enhanced knowledge of the wide, wide world, and our unprecedented studies in comparative religion, would be far too vast and complex. It is equally true that the enthusiasm of Christian churches for Foreign Missions is more vigorous than ever, and that missionary motives and methods differ in many and great respects from those of our predecessors in that noble field. We do not think now that the heathen are going headlong to perdition for want of what we can give them. Nor is it by any means a wise or warranted principle in missionary service, that all other religions than Christianity should be

subjected to violent attack, or denounced indiscriminately as being mere incarnations of evil. The careful and patient attempt to winnow out the chaff, and make use of whatever good remains in all the pathetic gropings of the human heart after good and God, must be left to other occasions. All religious reality is not Christian, though all Christian reality is religious, whatever else it be.

Canon Streeter has well said recently that—

> The world is calling for religion; but it cannot accept a religion if its theology is out of harmony with science, philosophy, and scholarship. Religion, if it is to dominate life, must satisfy both the head and the heart, a thing which neither obscurantism nor rationalism can do.[1]

His words are but an echo of what, a quarter of a century ago, Mr. Aubrey L. Moore so finely wrote in *Lux Mundi*:—

> For human nature craves to be both religious and rational. And the life which is not both is neither.[2]

This necessity of keeping faith in harmony with reason constitutes the theological problem of each succeeding age. It is alike impossible to end it, or evade it. If we accept for the moment the popular distinction between mind and heart, it must be acknowledged that whatever may be true of the human heart, the minds of men are in a condition of perpetual flux. The changes which take place in the mind of every normal child, as it

[1] *Foundations*, p. vii. [2] p. 109.

advances towards manhood, are truly typical of the development which is resistlessly going on as mankind passes from century to century. In years the child, in centuries the race, accumulates experiences of all kinds, which ceaselessly work on the lines of what may be truly called 'creative evolution.' A new world is continually in process of construction. The concomitant changes, both of external environment and of the mental activities, which correspond to these, are manifest, measureless, universal, irresistible. No thoughts can fully comprehend, let alone words convey, the differences between the ancient and the modern world. Granted but a basal human nature, and the men of the first Christian century would be almost as much astonished amongst the inhabitants of Mars—if there are any—as amidst the peoples of Europe to-day. It is as impossible to do justice to the differences of thought and feeling which come to pass between the centuries as to take the photograph of a restless child. And yet these differences, whether they relate to science or to politics, to sociology or religion, constitute what is really meant by ' modern light.' On the whole we cannot but believe that they are rightly so characterized. For they represent the accumulation of knowledge, and its application to human affairs. Whether it be wisely used or foolishly, knowledge must as really stand for light as ignorance for darkness. Here we are concerned only with the impact of this modern light upon Christian reality. But it is all the more necessary to know, as exactly as possible, what we mean by it, in order that we may know what it has done, is doing, and is likely to do.

Every thoughtful man knows, though no one can precisely define, what is meant in the mental realm by the 'modern atmosphere.' It may here be taken as synonymous with modern light. Whichever term be preferred, the significance is the same in fact, in complexity, in resistlessness, in universality. Enlarged knowledge, altered conceptions, changed ideals, confront us on every hand. Our human heritage to-day represents a vast and varied accumulation. From the time of Copernicus and Galileo in science, from the Renaissance in literature, from Eichorn in the midst of the eighteenth century in criticism, from Darwin and Huxley in nineteenth-century biology and anthropology, from a whole host of distinguished physicists at the close of that period, we inherit such stores of knowledge as have given us actually and beyond all controversy a new world. From the dust beneath our feet to the overwhelming awfulness of the million suns at night which we know to be but hints at untold millions more, from the tiniest gnat to God, we unlearn what our fathers thought so sure, we learn what never entered into their widest thoughts. Indeed, there is no one thing concerning which the intelligent man of to-day can think as his ancestors did. It is not merely a question of railways, and 'liners,' and wireless telegraphy and aeroplanes. The changed environment in all outer things does but betoken an even greater change in the mental outlook. Not even the well-merited fame of Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace can support to-day any geocentric theory of the universe. The visions of the ancient seer are gone for ever. Doubtless there was inspiration in his belief that he was the favoured inhabitant

of a wondrous realm around which in humble servitude circled sun and moon and stars. But little comfort comes to any man now from acknowledging what he would fain deny, but cannot, that at his best and utmost he is but an infinitesimal speck, crawling upon a speck which itself goes round a speck, in an utterly illimitable universe. If a citizen of the fifteenth or eighteenth century who should find himself in the streets of modern London would be bewildered, his amazement would only grow from more to more as he acquainted himself with all the other changes in the world of mind, which may be as deeply hidden but are as real and as common as the Metropolitan 'tube' system.

If we adhere strictly now to the world of religion, the changes in thought and word and deed are every whit as unquestionable and far-reaching. Whatever becomes of simple-hearted believers for whom there is little science and less history, the untroubled congregations in which for the most part they are found do not represent more than—on the average—one-tenth of the present population, even in this most Christian country. There are many explanations of the religious indifference to-day which every Christian laments, but it is worse than useless to think that this can be remedied or helped by pretending, either in pulpits or anywhere else, that the beliefs and ideals of Christian churches in these days are, or can be, or ought to be, those of the eighteenth century, still less those of the fifteenth, and least of all those of the fourth. We cannot, as Christian believers, go back to those days. We never shall. We are often told that the

world will never be the same after the present horrible Armageddon. Yet that reminder, undeniable as it is, is only a truth of emphasis. Even if the War had never been, the twentieth century would no more have reproduced the nineteenth in religion than in sociology. To both these realms of thought and life the oft-quoted words apply with increasing vividness :—

> The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
> And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

The highest honour we can pay to our forefathers, near or remote, is not shown in childish imitation of their words or thoughts, but by repeating that element in their example which truly ennobled them, viz. the courage with which they acted upon the new convictions of their day. We follow them most faithfully when we depart from their ideals, even as they did from those of their predecessors. Paul, Luther, Wesley—not to mention many other lesser lights—were the saviours of their age just in the degree in which they set its religious conventions at defiance, in acting upon their new knowledge, and adapting themselves in that sense to their environment. So, without labouring the case, is there to-day unmeasured need for the recent suggestion of Mr. Kirsopp Lake, that

> the churches of to-day ought to consider seriously the necessity for moving in the same direction—as the early Christians—and giving to the world a theology which will comply with the reasonable claims of the intelligence, an organization which will be capable of serving adequately

the spiritual requirements of human souls, and an ethic which will satisfy both the individual and social needs of a New Age. For a New Age is coming speedily upon us, and whether it is to come in light or in darkness depends upon the clearness of vision and singleness of purpose of the Stewards of Faith.[1]

Whilst the present pages are being written, the whole continent of Europe is in the throes of a cruel struggle brought about by Germany's mad stroke for supremacy over other European countries. Owing to that nation's numbers, strength, and wealth, together with the long and determined preparation for such a war, those who are fighting for truth and liberty are hard put to it, even yet. It is clear that the victory will not be won without dire cost. Whether in Germany or in Britain, all the hasty prophecies of a year ago, that now at last, through the pangs of national suffering, the long-wished-for 'revival of religion' was about to burst upon us, have been falsified. There are no reliable signs of any such thing in our midst. Whilst as to Germany, the *Historisch-Politische Blätter*, a highly respected religious paper in that country, declares that—

> After a year of war and its trials, there is a total absence in the German Press of a religious and Christian tone. In the early days of the War it was different, but all this turning to better and serious things has ceased. Instead, we have the one constant haughty song of human genius and power, of hatred and murder. Not one syllable of divine counsel, of divine deeds, of God's love and mercy.

[1] *The Stewardship of Faith*, p. vi.

It is to be feared that the Churches have to learn the same lesson as the Allies. In the end, we cannot but hope, righteousness will triumph, and Christ's Kingdom be hastened in its coming. But all the notions of ending the strife by some one great rush, some hurricane of heroism, have had to give place to the plain though tragic truth that the enemy is too strong for such counsels of desperation. 'Trenches' represent slow, costly, exhausting, depressing work. But in modern warfare they are the only way. Rash heroics could only lead to calamitous defeat. The parallel is very real for the Christian warfare. Those well-meaning enthusiasts who think that the coming New Age is going to be a Millennium ushered in by a cataclysm, a world suddenly converted by evangelical zeal, a Second Coming of Christ which in spectacular might will sweep away at once and for ever all opposing ill, are pitifully mistaken. 'It is not thus that souls are won,' nor age-long moral evils overcome. The Churches will do well to dismiss heroics to the age of knight-errantry, and to postpone predictions until after events. The duty and opportunity of the hour, for them as for our brave men on land and sea, are patient dealing with matters close at hand, as the best preparation for unforeseen contingencies.

In the world we are here considering, two things loom out large from the confusion which prevails. (1) All that we may characterize as 'modern light' has had, is having, must have, vast effect on the Christian thought and life of to-day. (2) This whole effect cannot be denied, and therefore must be faced frankly, fairly, unevasively, by all who

sincerely desire that Christianity should develop into the world-religion which will bring peace and hope and gladness to humanity.

All around us, now as for many generations, Christianity proceeds upon assumptions. Everywhere—especially in the realm of Christian belief which is known as Evangelical—most prominently on Sundays, but really every day, in all religious assemblies and all Christian appeals, assumptions are made which a moment's thought shows to be not so much vast as enormous. They are not mere assent to local or limited propositions, but the taking for granted as universal and eternal truth certain conceptions as to ourselves and the universe, upon which all else must turn, both here and hereafter. But all such assumptions are open to challenge. And all Christian assumptions are now challenged—more often, openly, and utterly, than ever before. Dean Henson has said, for instance, that it is useless to preach the Gospel, unless we can assume Theism and moral responsibility. The suggestion is manifestly true. But it is no less true that both these elementary and necessary foundations of Christian belief are not only called in question, but blatantly as well as insidiously denied by great numbers—far greater than comfortable believers ever imagine—throughout the whole world of to-day. The corrosive action of the modern atmosphere upon Christian beliefs is far more serious and widespread than the religious press ever acknowledges. Let us take a moderate estimate recently printed concerning Germany, and then ask if things are much better in this country. In the *Hibbert Journal* for July of last year—

1915—after summarizing the miserable delusions of German public opinion, Mr. Crooker asks :—

But what have the Christian churches of the Fatherland been doing for the past fifty years to counteract these evil influences, and make the Gospel of Jesus a living power in the life of the people? The simple earnest piety of the older Germany has largely disappeared. The crass belligerent rationalism of two generations ago, denounced as German infidelity by our pulpits, is also a thing of the past. The blight which has fallen upon that land—and not that land only—is a profound and widespread religious indifference. The Church is not so much attacked, as ignored. In a parish of 20,000 souls or more, the single church, except on special occasions, seldom has a congregation of 200 people. Church attendance is not taken into account as any part of the Sunday programme of life by the prosperous or educated classes. It is seldom that a University Professor is seen at church. Even many theological and Biblical Professors are by no means regular church attendants. Very few pay any attention to what our fathers called 'the means of grace.' Some eminent Professors of religious scholarship even rejoice in this condition of affairs, defending it as an evidence of greater personal piety—the complete flowering of Protestant freedom in religion.

Is it so very different from all this in 'Christian' Britain? Only honest eyes are required for a serious answer to the contrary. The city, for instance, in which these pages are written is no more 'godless' than others of its size. But the Free Churches herein, moved by highest motives, have just undertaken special efforts, for the very

reason that the proportion of those to whom Christian worship and sanctions are apparently nothing, to church-goers, is greater than eight to one. It is a University city, but whatever the future may bring, for some time now it has been deemed wise to send promising students to Germany to 'finish' there. With what result? Let the careful observer just quoted tell us—concerning America :—

> In hundreds of cases when young men have gone there to study they have turned their back upon the Church as soon as they returned. Scores upon scores have come back every year destitute of the faith with which they left our country, while practically none return with more religious enthusiasm than they had when they went abroad. Probably a considerable percentage of the members of our college faculties have a slight connexion with some church through the wife or children or the subscription paper. But regular attendance at any church or vital interest in religious work is rare among our college teachers who have been long educated in Germany. They do not indulge in attacks upon religion, but it is as much apart from their lives as witchcraft or astrology.

There is nothing in that picture which does not apply also to these realms. As to whether a similar aloofness, whether for the same or other reasons, does not also characterize other classes of the community besides the 'educated,' there is, alas, no room for question.

We hear much about the possible results of the War. But it must never be forgotten that there are two possibilities, and no man can say which is

at present the greater, or which is going ultimately to prevail. If some of our young men at the front are driven into faith, others are shocked out of it. Scenes too ghastly for description, and sufferings too dreadful to be told, have sobered some wild lads into deeper thought and higher purpose. But they have no less overwhelmed some finer spirits with the twin mysteries of pain and evil, thus wrecking their former beliefs in divine love and care. We have no means of knowing which result of this War's horrors will affect most minds. But we do know, beyond all contradiction, that all the gruesome events which enter into the present crisis must have and will have as actual and far-reaching influence upon religion as upon politics, or commerce, or sociology. That influence may be estimated in various ways. For the moment it may be put into a word. It will come to be a quest for Christian reality. As the progress of the War has shown, at fearful cost, the failure of certain means of defence in fortresses and trenches, against the cunning devices by which Germans have prostituted science to their desperate ends, so have our ordinary assumptions in religion been subjected to fierce fires of criticism of all sorts, and the question of questions for Christianity just now, even more than heretofore, is, Will they come out of the crucible purified but confirmed, or will they disappear as pious delusions which the New Age must henceforth dismiss from serious consideration? If assumptions are found to be baseless, the doctrines and ideals which rested on them must, of course, share in that collapse. That 'if,' in regard to Christian reality, is—without any exception, and

for reasons which will be presently shown—the greatest question of the hour. It has to be met fairly, frankly, rationally, conclusively, if Christianity is to survive, let alone develop, in the coming years of this century.

Perhaps the one caveat which has to be brought home most closely to the churches of every school, is that zeal alone demonstrates nothing beyond the energy of the zealot. It may possibly connote, in general, the sincerity of the enthusiast, but certainly no more. Not even his intelligence, let alone the truth or right of his creed, finds any support in his devotion. Fanaticism can always find its martyrs. Myriads of men have gone cheerfully to death for what calm and unbiased scrutiny proves to have been alike untrue and unworthy. In our British midst, probably the Christian devotion known as 'Evangelical' has most sincere and tireless exponents. It finds expression in sermons, labours, appeals, beyond calculation. But it is—even in its vast total—no guarantee of the truth of the assumptions on which it is based. If indeed zeal of all kinds, fearless, untiring, costly, universal, thoroughgoing, could demonstrate the truth of the assumptions of any religion, the devotion of Moslems, the wide world over, should suffice to show that Mohammed was verily all that he claimed to be. But Christians do not accept that undeniable devotion as sufficient reason for recognizing the reality of his divine mission, or the sacredness of the Koran. No more must they expect the modern world to regard their reiterated assertions, or their manifest zeal for the 'conversion of the world' to their beliefs, as sufficient proof of the justifiableness

of all those great assumptions upon which their appeals must ultimately rest.

It is not seldom declared that Christian reality consists in life, not in creed, in character rather than in doctrine. There is, of course, a certain amount of truth in such an allegation. But it comes perilously near to the avowal which, strange to say, emanates sometimes from professedly Christian sources, that it does not matter whether the Christian records are reliable or not, that it is indeed quite irrelevant even whether the Christ of the Gospels ever existed, so long as a man has a real 'experience of the Divine in his own breast.' The fatuity of such a position we shall be compelled presently to estimate. Here it is rather our painful duty to ask whether the Christian life, as generally known in and through Christian churches amidst modern civilization, affords any substantial warrant for the claim that its vast assumptions are all true. What is the actual condition of things in that great congeries of men and nations which is now known as 'Christendom'? How does it compare with the realms in which other religions control the feelings, beliefs, ideals, characters, of the people? That there is a genuine and impressive answer to this query we shall see presently. But all our appreciation of the good must not hide from us the other side. The commonplace of the hour, that if the nations had been truly Christian there would have been no war, is as true as trite. Not only are we, in spite of all Christian profession, in the midst of a veritable welter of blood and tears, but if we dismiss the War altogether, and think of the actual conditions of human living when all the nations

are at peace, what have we? From an acute and honest observer this, as the representation of what avowed Christian belief and life have brought:—

> Under the industrial revolution great masses of the people were sent into outer darkness. According to the Rev. Lewis Donaldson the Christian faith has never been put frankly and lucidly before the people for generations. There are few darker pages in the history of this country than those recording the earlier years of the industrial revolution. With the Church of England largely an appendage of the upper classes, and the Nonconformist Churches largely an appendage of the middle classes, women and children worked in coal-mines like slaves, little children were literally bought from Poor Law Guardians for soul-destroying toil in factories, and men laboured brutishly fifteen hours a day for scanty wages under conditions that destroyed limb and life more ruthlessly than war. The occasional voice of a Shaftesbury or a Kingsley was for years like a voice in the wilderness. 'I can scarcely remember an instance,' wrote Lord Shaftesbury in 1849, 'in which a clergyman has been found to maintain the cause of labourers in the face of pew-owners.'

That is only a mild picture of what has been, and yet obtains to an unmeasured extent, in the midst of what is called 'Christendom.' Seeing that the facts are undeniable, it can hardly be matter for astonishment that when delegates from afar, with the acuteness of vision which characterizes Japan, came to this country to investigate, and report as to whether Christianity should be taken for their national religion instead of Shintoism,

they were unable to see any reasons for recommending the change. However true may be the case suggested so forcefully by Professor Seeley in his *Ecce Homo*,[1] it cannot be honestly affirmed that, on the large scale, the practical results of an avowed adhesion to the Christian faith make its assumptions valid beyond need of further warrant.

Christian reality, we may safely affirm, would both prevent all wars between nations, and ensure in each nation a better way of living for all its citizens than the ceaseless and ruthless fighting which unchecked competition actually involves. But the possibility of Christian unreality has to be reckoned with; and that may have a double significance. Christianity may be unreal in its fundamental assumptions, as 'Rationalism' would have the people believe. Or, it may be sound in its foundations but rotten in its spiritual and practical superstructure. In both these respects Christian reality must be threefold. It must be valid for the past, demonstrable for the present, and credible for the future. The Christianity which is to give mankind any hope for the future, either near or far, must be now, both true in its foundations and true to its foundations. Christian reality, as here employed, definitely implies that in spite of all the imperfections of individuals or churches, there is a body of Christian belief and practice concerning which both these characteristics may be truthfully affirmed. Hence springs for the men and women of this age the surest hope they can cherish for the future wellbeing of humanity.

[1] See chap. xiv., p. 59, in the sixpenny edition. His words are quoted in the next section here.

Neither of the two terms 'Christian reality' need be laboured. As to 'Christian,' it is not here necessary to elaborate a system of theology. In the light of the full knowledge as well as need of the modern world, it is enough to define Christianity as the acceptance and practice of the teaching of Jesus Christ, as this is set forth in the New Testament, when the New Testament is fairly interpreted by itself. There may be as many conscientiously differing interpretations of His teaching as there are diverse human faces. But all the facial unlikenesses between men and women do not affect the fact that there is a human face, as a type unmistakably distinct from all other animal faces upon earth. Whether we accept Dr. Denney's suggestion of a common creed in a Christian formula—'I believe in God through Jesus Christ, His only Son our Saviour'—or not, the Christian faith cannot possibly be confused with any other form of religion. Its idiosyncrasies are too many and too manifest to need recounting.

Nor need we wander until we lose ourselves in the mazes of metaphysics concerning 'reality.' It is sufficient to mark how in ordinary intelligent speech, whether printed or spoken, our language supplies no other term which so satisfactorily connotes finality. Reality, we may be content to say, is that which really is. No synonym can save us from such tautology. In such an avowal, words have served their purpose to the utmost. They can no more. For the rest which remains unexpressed and inexpressible, they are as useless as is a printed physiologico-chemical description of the power of water to quench thirst, i.e. to express what a man

long parched with thirst actually feels when his relief comes. Pages without number might be filled with illustrations of the way in which writers of every kind fall back upon this word as expressing the final quality of some object, from which there can be no appeal. If it is real, it is real, and there is an end of it. Perhaps one or two illustrations might be interesting and illuminative. Thus in the work just quoted we find these :—

Was Paul's experience an illusion? Or was it a real manifestation of the exalted Lord?

The broad facts on which the certainty of the resurrection rests are that it is attested by men who declare that Jesus appeared to them, and that it stands in such relation to other realities as guarantees that it is itself real.

One way is to argue that the only reality in the resurrection stories is that of visionary appearances of Jesus. But reality, for the popular mind, is that which is demonstrable to the senses ; it is material reality.

The real proof of the resurrection had originally nothing to do with the grave. The empty tomb is never referred to as throwing light either on the character or the reality of the resurrection.

We do not assign to the resurrection life which has a higher reality of its own, that same kind of reality with which we are familiar in this world.

If we were merely dealing with texts the relation of which to reality was indeterminable except from themselves—

The resurrection is attested by people who are within the circle of realities to which it belongs.

Those who come to the Gospels thus can only feel that the life of Jesus, even in the historical

sense, is the most real thing in the world—to assume that we know what Jesus meant apart from this is simply unreal.

From numberless other sources similar usages might be multiplied. These two will suffice. Says Dr. W. N. Clarke :—

> Imperfectly, but really, we can see what conception of the highest good Jesus left in the world, to be wrought out in experience.[1]

So, Dr. J. M. Wilson, in the *Cambridge Theological Essays* :—

> The scientific idea of Christian revelation is not of some discontinuous rush of the real into the phenomenal, out of relation to the past continuous growth ; but of a concentration of the real always present in the phenomenal.

Thus, speaking generally, 'reality' is that from which there is no appeal. Phenomena may be real or delusive ; we do not know until we have applied tests. In strict speech an appearance is itself a reality. That is, it is a real appearance. But it may be only an appearance, in which case it also is a real delusion. So then, to put it paradoxically, yet truthfully and finally, the only reality about it is its unreality. But in religion, whatever becomes of metaphysics, that which the human mind and heart crave, with a longing which has proved to be inextinguishable, is reality without any haunting shadow of the unreal. There is no need to revile metaphysics as does Sir E. Ray Lankester, in his scathing denunciations of M. Bergson.

[1] *The Ideal of Jesus*, p. 259.

The self-appointed task of the metaphysician was not long ago compared by a keen thinker and great lawyer to that of a blind man in a dark room hunting for a black cat which—is not there.

The thinking lawyer, however great, did not display his keenness of mind by such an ebullition. But however charitably we may forgive an eminent biologist—or a physicist—for scorning realms of thought of which they know nothing, the principle is not a good one, to condemn with more than Papal dogmatism that which happens to be unintelligible to the anathematizer. On such lines the plough-boy would make short work of Newton's *Principia*, even as a child would of a page of Beethoven. 'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of' by biologists. Even the disquisition of Mr. Bradley, which many would find difficult to study, and our Professor would promptly commit to the flames, is seriously worthy of regard when we appreciate his conclusion, and put it side by side with the alternative which some modern biologists offer us. Says Mr. Bradley:—

> Reality is one Experience, self-pervading, and superior to mere relations. Its character is the opposite of that fabled extreme which is barely mechanical, and it is, in the end, the sole perfect realization of spirit. We may fairly close this work, then, by insisting that Reality is spiritual. Outside of spirit there is not and there cannot be any reality, and the more that anything is spiritual, so much the more is it veritably real.[1]

[1] *Appearance and Reality*, p. 552.

Now let us listen to the prophet of mechanism whom Sir E. Ray Lankester so extols as ' masterly.' Says Mr. Elliott :—

> I propose to describe the theory of life which ensues from the hypothesis that matter and energy are the sole realities. . . . Man may be defined as a machine for converting chemical energy into motion. . . . He is like a toy or puppet in which the arms, legs, and movable parts are drawn upwards and downwards by wires. . . . All the actions of men are explicable as purely material and mechanical sequences, without invoking the assistance of mind or consciousness, or anything but matter and energy working under their ordinary laws. Consciousness appears only as an inert accompaniment of material cerebral changes. This is the theory to which Huxley gave the name of epiphenomenalism.'[1]

We are not concerned here either with Huxley's views, or with Mr. Bradley's theology. But we are concerned with our own consciousness. For these two plain reasons. First, that, for all normal humans—imbeciles and ' D.T.' patients may be left out of account—consciousness is the bed-rock of all reality. If consciousness cannot be trusted, nothing can. And consciousness gives the lie direct to Mark Twain and all his fraternity, when they so naïvely declare that ' Man is a machine and nothing more.' If the study of metaphysics delivers us into Mr. Bradley's hands, at least he conducts us to an open door through which we may pass to find that, in the Christian sense, ' Spirit with spirit

[1] *Science and Professor Bergson*, H. S. R. Elliott, pp. 168, 179, 184.

may meet.' Whilst as regards the blind search for 'the black cat which is not there,' it *is* there, after all, quite as really as is any scientific reason for the dogmatic affirmation that consciousness has no more to do with the working of mind and will than the whistle of an engine with its speed. Agnosticism would do well, not seldom, to be more agnostic and less dogmatic. Its rebuke when it talks about man as 'a mere machine' need not be sought amongst theologians. The modern physiologist speaks plainly enough when he is up to date.

> It is at present, and I think always must be, impossible to apply the physical and chemical laws which explain the phenomena of dead matter to the explanation of consciousness. The great and profound mystery is not the difference between living and non-living things, but the nature of the difference between creatures without and those with a consciousness.[1]

So long, then, as we are ourselves, we shall not be browbeaten by any pseudo-infallible assurance that matter and energy are the only realities. We know better, at all events until the hour when a man knows that he is not.

We may return, therefore, unashamed and with good heart, to the ordinary experiences of daily life which we know to be real to us, whatever they may be to scientist or metaphysician. Inasmuch as the following pages are mostly concerned with the foundations of reality when modern searchlights play upon them, we will for the moment consider the Christian reality which is avowedly based upon

[1] Professor D. N. Paton, *Hibbert Journal*, January, 1915, p. 381.

those foundations. This, after all, is what the vast majority of mankind now as ever, or rather more than ever, care for most deeply. When we adopt this standpoint, two large considerations loom out unmistakably from all the confusions of the hour. (1) Christianity is a Gospel, i.e. a message of good tidings, or it is nothing. (2) The world of mankind needs such a Gospel now, more than ever before in all its history.

These are two plain propositions, of which the former is put beyond all doubt by the whole of those records to which our final appeal must be made; whilst the latter is driven home upon our crushed hearts by all life's tribulations, as well as by horrors which have made this War an avalanche of agony, both physical and mental, beyond all that humanity has ever known hitherto. If ever mankind needed comforting, and saving from despair, it is now.

There may be reasons, only too well grounded, for fearing that hitherto men in general have not been led to think about Christianity as a message of comfort and hope. But that is assuredly the fault of its advocates. There is no possibility of mistaking the intentions of Jesus, or their Apostolic echoes. If we pass over the mistakes of the friends of Christianity—which have damaged it in the world's eyes much more than the attacks of its foes—and look into the heart of Christ's Gospel, there is but one question to be asked and answered. The New Testament words in John iii. 16 have been quoted often enough, but their full meaning has had scanty justice done to it. Not nearly sufficient heed has been given to the words which

follow—'For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.' 'Saved from sin' is the usual preaching comment. True enough, no doubt. But often equally pitiless. In its original setting, the comfort and peace, the help and the hope, the inspiration and the power, which make that verse as radiant spiritually as radium is physically, constitute so unmistakable a promise that the one and only difference between belief and unbelief is in answer to the question, Is it real? Is it, or is it not, too good to be true? All the ages have echoed Philip's pathetic cry—'Lord, show us the Father, and that will end our fears.'[1] Is the Christian promise—'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit'—reality indeed, or but a mocking mirage?

That is the question of questions for this age; more than all else. Civilization has collapsed into chaos under the avalanche of international jealousies; professional Christianity has crumpled up in the fires of human passion; pride and bitterness and hate have not only set Nietzsche on the throne of the Corsican, but are threatening to curse the future with their own baleful persistence. Apart from the reality of the promise of Christ's Gospel, what comfort or hope is there for humanity? Full well we know how vehemently some modern anti-Christianisms would resent the question. We will show them presently such respect as they deserve. The solemn witness of the dire crisis in which we find ourselves now is that there is no

[1] Or, as Dr. Moffatt—'Lord, let us see the Father; that is all we want' (John xiv. 8).

valid and final hope save on the lines of the real Christianity, for want of which war drenches continents with blood, and peace suffers men and women to live the life of animals. If Christ be reliable and comes to His own, then at least we are sure that war will be no more, and peace will be purified from the unmeasured curse of selfishness. *If* Christ be real. *If* Christianity does really rest on Him. *If* His witness does really warrant our trust in the Divine Fatherhood. *If* those who call themselves His are really His in character and conduct. These are the greatest '*ifs*' that can concern the minds of modern men. To these questions all the problems of politics and sociology are subsidiary. For the answers to these queries control all else. Christian reality works internally, even as Jesus said—' The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until it was all leavened.' At least this is beyond controversy, that if Christianity had been true to Christ, and if its professors, not only in Germany but throughout Europe, had been true to it, there would neither have been war now, nor any dread of an industrial war if this calamity had never come.

But if Christ be only a myth; if the Divine Fatherhood be but ' the baseless shadow of a wistful human dream '; if Christianity be but a delusion of sincere fanatics, or a clever concoction for the selfish purposes of insincere pretenders; then the human future is as dark for this world as for any realm beyond the grave. This has to be said, of course, in full view of all the pleas of our modern ' Monists,' ' Humanists,' ' Determinists,' German

Socialists, and Agnostics. Due heed is given elsewhere to their protests. The mystery of pain also is not forgotten. Those who most deliberately assert the reality of Christian foundations, and those who most earnestly strive to incarnate that reality in their lives, are one in acknowledging that there are many problems which faith does not solve, for the solution of which we must wait. But Christian reality means hope; and if we may hope for that which we do not see, then, as Paul said, we can ' with patience wait for it.' Christian reality does at least reduce our problems to such a minimum that they stimulate instead of overwhelming us, even as fire does when we confine it to our grates. We come then, even in the fiercest modern light, to see that Mr. Fiske was right when he wrote so carefully :—

> To say that the ways of Providence are inscrutable is still something more than an idle platitude, and there is still room for the belief that could we raise the veil that enshrouds eternal truth, we should see that behind nature's cruellest works there are secret springs of divinest tenderness and love. The mystery of evil remains a mystery still, but it is no longer a harsh dissonance such as greeted the poet's ear when the doors of hell were thrown open, for we see that this mystery belongs among the profound harmonies in God's creation.[1]

In such case, Sir F. Younghusband's pathetic pessimism—in his interesting volume *Within*—however sincere, becomes unnecessary. It may be dismissed as unwarranted ; and that which humanity

[1] *Through Nature to God*, pp. 46, 56.

needs ever more and more—even such a promise as the Apostle felt he could hold out, ' Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Spirit '—comes within the range of our vision, and indeed the touch of our heart.

It is, however, all too plain that the generality of modern mankind do not so regard the mission of Christianity. The churches have now to face the fact that in all its three realms of past, present, and future, Christianity is denied by many, questioned by many more, held only loosely or tremblingly by untold numbers. To ask why this is so, means the raising of many questions beyond our scope here. One cultured Christian advocate—in a series of lectures upon ' The Reproach of the Gospel, an inquiry into the apparent failure of Christianity as a general rule of life and conduct, with special reference to the present time '—goes so far as to say that—

> It cannot, I think, be questioned that the striking contrast between the lives of Christians and the rules which they profess to accept is the great religious difficulty of the present day. The attitude of the people to-day to the churches is not determined by Higher Criticism or questions of ceremonial, but by the unsatisfactory lives of professing Christians.[1]

Whilst another Oxford tutor and chaplain declares that—

> The insecurity of the situation reaches down to the foundations not only of Victorian assumptions, but of the Christian religion. . . . Revolt has gone

[1] *Bampton Lectures for* 1907, by Rev. J. H. F. Peile, pp. 6, 17.

deeper than merely rejecting the seeming irrelevancies of Christian dogma. It has undermined and shaken the ancient strongholds of belief in God and man.[1]

For those who are acquainted with to-day's literature, no proof of such a statement will be required. But it may be an interesting illustration to note the words of a well-known ex-Romish Priest and Professor,[2] addressed to the Glasgow University Society of St. Ninian :—

> I look to the broad mass of religious people who appeal to the order and beauty as well as complexity of the universe, or to conscience, to justify their belief in God, and who find in the qualities of the human mind a ground for their trust in immortality. Science is constructing an interpretation of these phenomena which makes their religious interpretation baseless. I plead with them to understand our attitude, when we have searched the world in vain for God, and have then turned our energy and devotion to solve the fascinating problems of science, and the more mighty problems of human life and suffering.[3]

This kind of sentiment well represents the attitude of the Rationalist Press Association, for whom this prolific author largely speaks. It is by no means difficult to answer. Indeed, all that is here asserted, or implied, has been answered fairly and frankly already.[4] The Christian foundations are assuredly

[1] *Foundations*, by seven Oxford men, p. 17.

[2] Mr. Joseph McCabe. [3] *Religion and the Modern Mind*, p. 89.

[4] Even apart from other and abler works, it is all fully met in my own two volumes, *Haeckel's Monism False* and *Theomonism True* (C. H. Kelly).

not disproved. But it were vain indeed to pretend —as some churches and Christian teachers do—that nothing has been accomplished by the efforts of anti-Christian advocates, aided as they are by the corrosive influence of the modern atmosphere in general on Christian assumptions. They have at least created a widespread feeling of uneasiness, or uncertainty, which is much more influential than church officials acknowledge. It is, of course, so much more easy to pull down than to build up, to deny than to affirm with warrant. Every one knows that the amount of intelligence which is required for the asking of a question is much less than that which is needed for the apprehension of a valid answer. But so the case stands; and it is becoming decidedly more rather than less difficult to cultivate a rational adhesion to Christian reality.

There are reasons for religious uneasiness, which are by no means all injurious to genuine faith. No man can deny that we are in a transition state in regard to Christian beliefs. No man ought to wish to deny it. For if it be once acknowledged that what is needed for the human soul and for the human race is reality—reality in the least of life's promises, but most of all in the greatest—then there is very much in the faith and practice of Christianity at present which is quite unreal, and needs to be eliminated. Transition sometimes means elimination. Christianity, as at present popularly understood, will lose much that many prize. But the loss will be as real gain to mankind as it is gain for the child in the nursery to lose a harmful toy, or for a student to exchange a false method for true. Inasmuch as all theology is but a branch of human

science, and all human science often errs and has to be corrected, it is only natural that theological mistakes should have occurred, whether they be less or more. It is no less clear that theologians ought to be as thankful as other men of science are, to part with old errors on the receipt of new truths. But it is as difficult to get hosts of sincere believers to see and feel this, as it is easy to point out its reasonableness. The situation has been thus truly put by a well-qualified observer from the Christian standpoint :—

> If we regard the tide of human existence as a whole, neglecting for the moment the fate of local ebb or eddy therein, we shall recognize that the general result is a rise in level. In no respect is this progress more definite than in the evolution of the higher mental faculties. And with the higher development of these comes the demand for corresponding modification and change in the exposition and presentation of religious doctrines. At the same time the difficulty has to be faced, that a given civilized society will be found to include, at one and the same time, an almost infinite number of intellectual types, representative of almost every phase in the sequence of human evolution. The problem is to satisfy the requirements of each and all.[1]

It is difficult, in very deed. Any one acquainted with the present-day life of the churches can call up without the least hesitation the names of leading religious teachers who all strongly avow themselves Christian, but who in their earnestly—often vehemently—uttered convictions are almost as

[1] Dr. W. L. H. Duckworth, *Cambridge Theological Essays*, p. 174.

wide apart as belief from unbelief. It is perhaps unnecessary to mention names, but to do so would only make more vivid the true picture here drawn by Dr. Duckworth.

What, then, is to be done on behalf of Christian reality? Volumes without number have appeared in answer to this query, which do but further illustrate the 'almost infinite number of intellectual types' which abound to-day. Out of the confusing strife of tongues, it would seem as if a few plain principles emerge, the acknowledgement of which would greatly contribute to Christian reality, both as to doctrine and practice. The briefest statement of these must here suffice.

(i.) No single utterance from any highly esteemed individual, or deliberately appointed convention, can be regarded as an infallible oracle, the revision or even rescinding of whose decisions must not be contemplated.

(ii.) Increasing responsibility cannot but rest in these days upon every avowed Christian teacher, to set forth in all his ministrations only that which he believes on good grounds to be true, irrespective of mere antiquity or convention.

(iii.) It must be made clear, without evasion or vacillation, that Christian reality does not consist in theological adhesion to the past. Our fathers in their beliefs, we will say, were undoubtedly sincere. They may have been right or wrong. That is matter for careful consideration. But if they are found to have been mistaken, it is as Christian a duty to forsake their attitude as, if they prove to be true, it is to adhere to it. Truth, not age, is the condition of reality.

(iv.) Even in the discovery of new truth, equally with adherence to old truths which have come out of the crucible confirmed, there must yet be large allowance for the personal equation. Christian reality neither demands nor permits any attempts, however well meant, to run Christian doctrines or principles into rigid moulds as molten metal may be cast. No man can define any truth for another; any more than he can eat for him, or view a landscape for him. To say that Christianity is a life, not a creed, is more than a platitude. It is so true that, like good health, it is ever liable to be forgotten. No uttered or printed or written words convey exactly the same impression to two persons, even though they be nearest relatives or closest friends. We live in a world in which it is not the least benediction that all human faces are unlike. To live for one week in a town where all were exactly alike would be to qualify for the asylum. But the idiosyncrasy of soul is as real as that of the body, and must be conceded in religion as truly as in food.

(v.) Hence, also, uniformity in worship, or in service, is as foreign to Christian reality as rigid precision in statements of belief. Nothing is more lamentable from the truly Christian standpoint, nothing more contrary to Christian reality, than the desire on the part of some believers to see all genuine Christians 'one,' in a sense which certainly their Master Himself never contemplated. Uniformity in mode of worship or in manner of service would be as fatal to real Christian life, as it would be to all ordinary life if all men, women, and children were compelled to wear the same dresses, eat the

same food, and do the same things, all day long, in every city throughout the land.

(vi.) Perhaps the hardest principle of all for very many excellent people to accept, let alone appreciate is that, in Christian doctrine and practice alike finality of statement, or of ideal, is neither possible nor desirable. On the whole, the Christian life of to-day is measurably better than that of the Puritans. So may that of our great-grandchildren be than ours; although it may differ from ours even more than ours from that of Cromwell's Ironsides, or the Pilgrim Fathers. Whilst as to our present-day 'orthodoxy' in doctrinal statement, let one who gave to the world perhaps the best all-round statement of Christian theology there is in print still speak:—

> Nor so long as Christianity is a living thing and not a relic can any statement of doctrine be final. Thought will always be busy with the great themes, and as long as men think they will see new light. Progress is a necessary form of the life of doctrine, each generation adding something to the work of the past, and offering something to the future. Christian doctrine is thus bound to be an ever-moving stream of intellectual and spiritual appreciation, and in its movement is its power. The steadfastness and the variability are both due to the fact that doctrine is the expression of a life that never fails.[1]

The witness of the New Testament hereupon is unmistakable. Not only was the Gospel which the early Christian missionaries preached a great advance

[1] Dr. W. N. Clarke, *The Ideal of Jesus*, p. 279.

upon all that was sincerely held by pious Jews, but when in the primitive churches there grew up that great division—whose intensity has only in modern times been appreciated—between the Pauline and Petrine sections, how did Paul himself deal with it? His letter to the Galatians is sufficient answer. From the midst of the most controversial of all portions of the New Testament, and when circumcision was the 'orthodoxy' of the day, we get the all-comprehending and far-reaching principle:—

> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any real importance, but only faith working through love. . . . Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision really matters, but only a renewed nature.[1]

It would seem, therefore, that when the whole modern situation is surveyed with honest carefulness from the Christian standpoint, two great truths stand out vividly before the vision of every genuine believer, as being equally unmistakable and impressive. The first is the need for openness of mind and heart; the second is the call to fidelity of life and character. One is well aware that to specify these is much rather a platitude than a discovery. That, however, lessens neither their truthfulness nor their importance.

(i.) It is verily much more than a platitude to say that there must be openness of mind and heart, to an extent as yet unknown amongst ordinary churches, if Christian reality is to prevail in the days to come. The Christianity of the future can

[1] Gal. v. 6, vi. 15.

no more simply repeat the past, than the Gospel which Paul preached could merely echo the preceding Judaism. The average believer in these days does but scanty justice to the mental conflict which must have distressed the first converts to Christianity. The severe treatment which the Apostles often received was, after all, not only natural, but just such as—in other equally painful ways—has been meted out by the Church, through all the ages, to those whom it pronounced heretics. It is still, in greater or less degree, the lot of the 'unorthodox.' There is no need to quote specific cases. But for an example to the contrary, nothing can be better than the case of the Bereans, concerning whom it is honourably recorded :—

> Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all readiness of mind, at the same time searching the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. That indeed was why many of them believed.[1]

Such a principle is for ever an integral part of Christian reality. The only difference now is, that the 'Scriptures' to be searched are larger. The Bereans knew as sacred Scriptures only the writings of the Old Testament. In later times the orthodox, whether Romish or Puritan, condemned the heterodox by appeal to Scriptures which included our New Testament as well as Old. The Scriptures to which the believer of to-day must be content, nay, glad, to submit his case, include not only the two Testaments, but all else that modern knowledge

[1] Acts xvii. 11.

has deciphered of the divine writings throughout the universe, so far as we can apprehend it—from the constitution of the infinitesimal atom, to the overwhelming rush of countless suns through illimitable space. In the language of our own times, Professor Gardner has well expressed the situation.

> Our principle has been fixed from the beginning, and is coming out more and more clearly. It is that it is the duty of a Christian to walk in the light and not in darkness; to be ready to accept all help which may come to the intellect from scientific discovery, from historic research, from new views of man and society; but to combine such modernity with heartfelt loyalty to the Founder of Christianity, and to the church which on earth continues the divine obedience which was the basis of the faith He taught. If we persevere in this attitude, we need not fear either the reaction which would lead to intellectual obscurantism, or the despair which would lead to the casting aside of belief in God and Christ.[1]

(ii.) The second great contribution to Christian reality, for which these days call as never before in all the past, is even more of a platitude, and more of a necessity, than the foregoing. Few poetic words are quoted more often than Tennyson's

> Let knowledge grow from more to more,
> But more of reverence in us dwell,
> That mind and soul according well
> May make one music as before,
> But vaster;

[1] Address of Dr. Percy Gardner at Annual Conference of the Churchmen's Union, Rugby.

and there is good ground for hoping that the Christian beliefs of the future will embody such an ideal. But no increased reverence, or 'vaster music,' will alone avail to save a world full of such creatures as men and women. Another quatrain from the same noble source suggests what is lacking :—

> And so the Word had breath, and wrought
> With human hands the creed of creeds;
> In loveliness of perfect deeds,
> More strong than all poetic thought.

Beyond all doubt the 'loveliness of perfect deeds' is stronger for good than all scientific discovery, or philosophical acumen, or theological precision. Whatever changes may be called for in religious thought, and whatever uncertainties of belief may now prevail, at least there are some results of true allegiance to Jesus Christ so plain that the only question possible about them is—shall they be done, or left undone? We cannot forget how even John Stuart Mill, far removed as he was from Christianity, declared that an unbeliever could not 'find a better rule of virtue' than to 'endeavour so to live that Christ would approve his life.' That rule is not difficult to make out. We do know that certain traits of character, certain thoughts, words, deeds, would be to Him intolerable. Not only would there have been no war 'if all who profess and call themselves Christians' had been true to Him in what they know—leaving doubtful matters out of account—but almost all our social problems, our domestic frictions, our personal evils, would die out as surely as a flame does in carbon dioxide.

In the Bampton Lectures, noticed above, Mr. Peile has summarized the case only too truly.

> The hope and purpose of Liberal Theology have been, and are more than ever to-day, to make Christianity a possible religion for the intelligent man of the world. But in clearing away rightly or wrongly the intellectual difficulties, it has brought men face to face with the real and fundamental contradiction between Christianity and the world, which is ethical.
>
> If all the men and women who call themselves Christians would simply do the good they know, and eschew the evil they know, for Christ's sake, the aspect of our social and economic problems would be so changed that we have no right to suppose that they would remain insoluble.[1]

Upon these two principles, then, depends the Christian reality of the New Age that is upon us, and therewith the fate of Christianity in all the future of this world. (i.) Search for truth to the uttermost, in every department of life, and willingness to receive what is shown to be true, be the consequences what they may. But (ii.) along with such modern Berean nobility, the daily practical acknowledgement, in all things near and far, that Paul was right in his deliberate and emphatic assertion of 'a more excellent way.'

> If I speak with all the tongues there are, both human and angelic, but do not love, I am but a blaring trumpet or a clanging cymbal. If I am ever so gifted in public speech, and can unravel any mysteries, as well as possess all knowledge of

[1] *Bampton Lectures for* 1907, pp. 125, 126, 193.

things hidden from others, yes, even if I have faith enough to move mountains of difficulty from their foundations, but have not love, I am—nothing. Nay, more, if I give away to the poor all that I possess, and actually surrender my body to the flames, but have no love, it all avails me nothing.

Neither of these two can for a moment be lost sight of, if faith in God is to prevail against Agnosticism, or Christ is to triumph over Nietzsche. It were difficult to say which principle is the more costly. There are myriads of people yet in the churches trying to live Christlike lives, to whom evolution, the Higher Criticism, and 'liberal theology,' are but dangerous foes to be resisted to the death. Just as, at this sad hour, myriads of Germans are giving themselves to suffering and death freely, because they believe what they have been so falsely told, that the Fatherland is in danger from the spiteful envy and hate of Britain. The one fear is as utterly unwarranted as the other.

On the other hand, it is no less true that thousands of men and women, both within and without the churches, are eager for all new light, anxious that religion should be up to date in all its foundations and representations, with whom, alas, it is much happier to live an hour than a day, let alone a year. It is quite possible—indeed, this statement is a photograph from life—to have a Christian official always insisting with strongest emphasis upon the doctrinal necessity of the 'new birth,' and yet be himself such that no one wished to have anything to do with him. Let any one who knows say whether it is harder for the intelligent man to be

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3.

good, or the good man to be intelligent. The certainty remains that Christian reality demands that goodness and intelligence should go hand in hand, and that those principles which God hath joined together, no man should seek to put asunder. Whatever be the cost, it is from such a union alone that the Christian reality for which civilization is waiting will spring and grow in the days before us. Their cost, whether personal, or ecclesiastical, or social, will be but the pledge of their worth. For only from their thorough and constant blending will come to the modern believer the assurance he needs, that he has 'not followed cunningly devised fables'; and in no other way can there be created the maximum of appeal to the modern unbeliever.

All shams are disappointing, and all disappointments are painful, though the intensity of the sting may vary. But there is valid reason for asserting that there could come to humanity no more irremediable pain than the discovery that after all Christianity was a delusion. The greatest sceptic of the nineteenth century did not speak one whit too strongly when he avowed that—

> The loss of the belief in Providence belongs indeed to the most sensible deprivations which are connected with a renunciation of Christianity. . . . This sense of abandonment is at first something awful. But then, what avails it to have recourse to an illusion?[1]

And at the time when Professor G. J. Romanes felt himself compelled to print his sweeping rejection of Theism, he frankly confessed :—

[1] Strauss, *The Old Faith and the New*, p. 435.

So far as the ruination of individual happiness is concerned, no one can have a more lively perception than myself of the possibly disastrous tendency of my work. When I think, as think at times I must, of the appalling contrast between the hallowed glory of that creed which once was mine and the lonely mystery of existence as now I find it—at such times I shall ever feel it impossible to avoid the sharpest pang of which my nature is susceptible.[1]

Here comes, then, the tremendous question that looms behind all the present colossal tragedy of war. Compared with it, the lines of territory to be marked out, or the terms of peace to be enforced, are after all comparative trifles. The greatest issue at stake is whether Christian reality shall be maintained and developed, or exploded and buried beneath its own débris. 'Weltmacht oder Untergang'—'World-power or extinction'—shouted those who plunged Europe into the Inferno. It voices only too seriously the alternative of the greater war which must go on, when the gruesome scenes now being enacted come to an end. The difference between the blackest midnight and the brightest noon is not greater than that between a human soul, a nation, a world, under the domination of Nietzschean militarism on the one hand, and on the other, subject to Him who said:—

Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I[2]—unlike all other lords—will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of

[1] *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 28.

[2] The ἐγὼ in this clause—κἀγὼ—in Matt. xi. 28, is emphatic.

Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and ye will find rest unto your souls. For Mine is a blessed yoke, and the burden of My service is light.

It is not too much to say, in the lurid glare of the last twelve months, that German Chauvinism leads to hell, as compared with the Heaven on earth which Christian reality—loyalty to Jesus Christ—would bring to all mankind.

It seems, in very deed, as if mankind had come to the parting of the ways. Civilization, like the ancient selfish autocrat, has been 'weighed in the balances and found wanting.' The nation that boasted most of its 'kultur' has flung upon poor humanity the greatest curse our earth has ever known. The fierce flames that belch from the fiery furnace of Europe's present agony show vividly the two paths open to modern mankind. The one points upward to the highest fellowship with the divine. The other leads backward to the brute, whence, ages ago, man emerged. Christian reality declares, without equivocation, that Christ came on purpose to save men from such downward retrogression, and make it possible for every man to rise to the highest.

That is, assuredly, 'good news' beyond all utterance—if it be true. But is it true? Is the Christianity which professes to hold that out to men, real or unreal? Is it real in its foundations; real in its creation of noblest human character; real in its outpouring of hallowed oil on all earth's troubled waters; real in its promise of more than food to the hungry and clothing to the naked, even all else that can make this life worth living for

every human child ; real in its further promise that when death has done its worst to our loved ones, and leaves us only problems of pain until our turn also comes, there is waiting for all who look for it a brighter day, when problems will be lost in peace, and mysteries of suffering, here unsolved, will be seen to have been after all the only way to the best and noblest? If all that, and more, be what Christian reality connotes, then all men ought to welcome it. And most men will—when the reality is made plain.

The pages that here follow are but a humble contribution to such reality. There is no room for originality, no possibility of completeness. But if in their incompleteness they do in the least degree help to show that there is such a Christian reality as is, therefore, also true, reliable, practicable, hopeful—good news, indeed, for all mankind—the writer's prayer will be answered, and his purpose satisfied.

I

ACTUAL—CHRISTIAN REALITY IN THE REALM OF FACT

It is on all sides worth considering (blatant ignorance or base vulgarity alone excepted) that the revolution effected by Christianity in human life is immeasurable and unparalleled by any other movement in history.

But not only is Christianity thus so immeasurably in advance of all other religions. It is no less so of every other system of thought that has ever been promulgated in regard to all that is moral and spiritual. Whether it be true or false, it is certain that neither philosophy, science, nor poetry has ever produced results in thought, conduct, or beauty in any degree to be compared with it.

Only to a man wholly destitute of spiritual perception can it be that Christianity should fail to appear the greatest exhibition of the beautiful, the sublime, and of all else that appeals to our spiritual nature, which has ever been known upon our earth.—*Thoughts on Religion*, by the late PROFESSOR G. J. ROMANES, p. 160.

To-day the modern philanthropy of the English-speaking world is most markedly under the influence of the work done by a small body of men who set out to link again Christianity with social justice, and who resolved, because they were Christian and had found in Jesus Christ access to the Father, to understand the point of view of the new working man in his Radicalism, and to make him, if possible, understand the teachings of Jesus Christ. —PROFESSOR T. C. HALL, in *Christ and Civilization*, p. 400.

Beyond all doubt the present degree of human culture owes, in great part, its perfection to the propagation of the Christian system of morals and its ennobling influence.—PROFESSOR HAECKEL, in *Confession of Faith of a Man of Science*, p. 66.

I

ACTUAL—CHRISTIAN REALITY IN THE REALM OF FACT

It will be conceded that the preceding pages have not represented Christian churches as by any means perfect. There is, however, no more intention than need, to join the modern host of critics who have almost made a religion out of their efforts to pour scorn upon all organized forms of Christianity. Tennyson spoke of the lamented Prince Consort as one who wore

> the white flower of a blameless life,
> Before a thousand peering littlenesses,
> In that fierce light which beats upon a throne,
> And blackens every blot;

and the fine figure might well and truly apply to Christianity. For it has been, and yet is, so really enthroned, alike in numbers and in influence, on the minds and hearts of men, that its natural imperfections are blackened by the 'thousand peering littlenesses' into crimes, and its comparative failures are magnified into reasons why it should be wholly swept away.[1] So comes it to pass that not only do churches in particular suffer, but

[1] 'One of the great social needs of our time is to sweep away the whole tottering structure of conventional religion and worship' (Mr. J. McCabe, in *Haeckel's Critics Answered*).

Christianity in general, from much more than the quiet corrosion of the modern atmosphere. The Christian faith is now subject to direct and definite attacks which for virulence, no less than cleverness and boldness, exceed all those which have hitherto been made upon it. This is true to an extent which is very little known and still less acknowledged within the pale of the churches. Mr. Drawbridge, speaking as one of the few who do know, has recently expressed the truth of the case thus :—

> The Christian Church employs practically her whole strength and all her machinery in elaborating theology, attending to ecclesiastical matters, organizing charity, and preaching the Gospel to those who are already believers in God. Consequently Christians make no adequate provision for appealing to the intellect of those who do not believe in God, and who on the conscientious ground that their intellectual conscience demands evidence before accepting assertions, will not believe mere theistic assumptions. This unequal division of our Christian forces in the face of an aggressive and organized foe is fatally unsatisfactory and unpractical. A considerable proportion of our strength should be employed in convincing sceptics of the truth of our most fundamental premisses.[1]

But such a protest, like many more, will almost certainly produce no effect. It is strange but true, that amongst the churches no kind of service in the whole realm of religion is more thankless, less appreciated, or less desired, than any endeavour to

[1] *Common Objections to Christianity*, p. 10.

supply the need pointed out by Mr. Drawbridge. The Christian Evidence Society is less acknowledged, and more grudgingly supported, than any other society having Christianity in view. As a rule, efforts to reach those above contemplated, or to provide reasons for faith that shall appeal to the great numbers who neglect churches not from indifference but from conviction, are dismissed by church authorities as being equally unnecessary, useless, and dangerous. The old childish excuse that those in the churches only learn to doubt by the endeavour to give reasons for faith, still holds its ground. Whilst nothing is more common than to hear of cases in which conversion to Christian faith is said to have been brought about, not by any intelligent appeals on the ground of truth, but —when all these had failed—by some supernatural influence which only comes through prayer, or emotion. There is, however, no possible denial of Dean Henson's avowal, already mentioned, that—

> Before the Gospel can reasonably be considered, there must be at least agreement in the postulate of Theism, and as following from that, in the moral responsibility of man.[1]

But it is only the truth to say that such agreement is, in these days, farther off than ever. Neither Theism nor moral responsibility is accepted without demur, by myriads of people to-day. Lest it should be thought that this is mere pessimism, disproved by the large audiences now to be found on Sunday evenings in many city centres, let us mark what a

[1] *Notes on Popular Rationalism*, p. 221.

well-known preacher of the ultra-evangelical type, farthest removed from modernism, affirms :—

> What we may call initial faith is gradually dying out among the masses outside the churches. When my colleagues and I began our present work, we could usually take for granted that the great verities of the Word of God and the cardinal truths of the Gospel were outwardly accepted by ninety-five per cent. of those who crowded our meetings. We dare not act upon any such assumption now.[1]

That is quite a mild statement. It is some years since Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man* appeared, in which he said :—

> I undertake to show that the destruction of Christianity is essential to the interests of civilization ; and also that man will never attain his full powers as a moral being until he has ceased to believe in a personal God, and in the immortality of the soul. Christianity must be destroyed.

But voices come now from all parts of the world to the same effect. There is little need to speak of Nietzsche, for his attitude has sufficiently incarnated itself in the curse which Prussianized Germany has brought not only upon Europe, but the whole world. Yet there may be many who do not know how plainly he expressed that attitude in words. As thus :—

> I condemn Christianity, and confront it with the most terrible accusation that an accuser has ever had in his mouth. To my mind it is the

[1] *Christian Church and the Present Outlook*, Thomas Waugh, p. 34.

greatest of all conceivable corruptions. I call Christianity the one great curse, the one enormous and innermost perversion, the one great instinct of revenge for which no means are too venomous, too underhand, too underground, and too petty—I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind.[1]

Nietzsche has many followers in Britain as well as on the Continent.

As regards moral responsibility, it should be remembered that from America the learned ones in this country fetched Mark Twain, to be made an Oxford Doctor of Law, and it is he who has left behind him a volume of one hundred and sixty pages written on purpose to demonstrate that—

> The human being is merely a machine and nothing more. . . . Man and a machine are about the same thing; there is no personal merit in the performance of either. Man is an impersonal engine, moved, directed, commanded, by exterior influences only. He originates nothing, not even a thought. And you not only did not make that machinery yourself, but you have not even any command over it. A man's brain is merely a machine; and it works automatically, not by will power. It has no command over itself; its owner has no command over it.[2]

If it was for stuff like this that he received the Oxford Doctorate, then one cannot help suggesting that those who brought it about ought to exemplify

[1] For fuller yet brief account of Nietzsche's virulent hatred of Christianity, see the volume on 'Nietzsche' in Jack's *The People's Books*, chap. iii.

[2] *What is Man?—passim.*

what he himself said so inconsistently elsewhere—that ' man is the only animal that blushes, or needs to.' A blushing machine would indeed be a novelty, but nothing less would be sufficient to emphasize his own self-contradiction[1] or the unwisdom of those who crowned such sentiments with approval.

But we need not go either to Germany or America for specimens of the attitude towards Christianity which characterizes these days. The editor of the *Clarion* has no hesitation in proclaiming his conclusions :—

> Christianity is a fabric of impossibilities erected upon a foundation of error. The Christian religion is untrue from end to end, from bottom to top. It has not a solid reason to stand upon. Man being only what God made him, and having only the powers God gave him, *could* not sin against God any more than a steam-engine can sin against the engineer who designed and built it.[2]

The book in which these and many other equally foolish things are said[3] has been scattered and read by tens of thousands of people in these realms. As also, almost to equal extent, has another volume

[1] In his Preface to this very work the writer says :—' These papers were written seven years ago. I have examined them once or twice per year since, and found them satisfactory. I have just examined them again, and am still satisfied that they speak the truth.' So then, we have to contemplate a printing-machine which, after having reeled off a mile of printed matter, checks itself to see whether it is printing what is true ! ! Verily it would be an excellent practice for some modern journals. But is it likely ? Or how are we to attribute intelligent sincerity to any author who thus unblushingly contradicts himself ?

[2] *God and My Neighbour—passim.*

[3] All of which were exposed at the time by the present writer's *Clarion Fallacies.*

still more specious and fallacious,[1] which declares that—

> The hostile evidence appears to be overwhelming. Christianity cannot be true. Provided that we see things as they really are and not as we wish them to be, we cannot but come to this conclusion. To put it frankly, the churches have for their chief ally nowadays the trinity of ignorance, insincerity, and indifference. As fairly conclusive evidence we have the dismal failure of Christianity, after nearly two thousand years' trial; the apparent impossibility of and complete want of evidence for the miracles on which Christianity is founded; the destructive criticism of the Bible which cannot be gainsaid; the intensely grave suspicions thrown upon the originality of Christianity by the revelations of comparative mythology; the various dilemmas arising from the accepted doctrine of evolution; the inadequacy and conflicting character of the so-called theistic proofs of a personal deity; and finally the fallacies in arguments hitherto so popular and faith-producing. We cannot get away from facts. Modern knowledge forces us to admit that the Christian faith cannot be true.[2]

These voices are but typical of myriads more. They cannot be hushed. Can they be ignored? Is not Professor Hall, of New York, rather right when he says:—

> The cry is going up from many hearts, 'Show us the Father.' There are weary and rebellious

[1] *The Churches and Modern Thought*, by Philip Vivian. Four hundred well-printed pages for sixpence, certainly reflects great credit on the zeal of the Rationalist Press Association, and confirms Christ's word in Luke xvi. 8.

[2] pp. 317, 322.

working men who are being taught day in and day out that there is no God, that the churches are fooling them, that the ministry is a selfish, money-making, cowardly class institution, and that the only way out is to overthrow all religion and abandon all churches. How shall we meet this attack? Shall we scorn the cry and make no response to the complaint? If we do, we are lost. God will raise up other and more religious forces to represent Him.[1]

Undoubtedly most of the churches do 'make no response to the complaint.' Almost all the 'missions' that are held are addressed to those who are supposed to have no doubts, and who, it is taken for granted, have no right to find any difficulties. Theism, moral responsibility, Biblical inspiration, Christian doctrines, are all quietly assumed, as if there was nothing more to be said about them, and all that was left was to act upon them.

Is it, then, any wonder that the bulk of the men in this age, even in these 'Christian' realms, who are being ever more fully educated and compelled to think, should come to believe that 'P. Vivian' is right, and that the churches do not answer such allegations as his, because they cannot? Assuredly it is not merely a German voice that speaks through Professor Weinel, of Jena, in his *Jesus in the Nineteenth Century and After*:—

> Have we still the right to preach this Jesus to others? Has He not become the object of the greatest doubt on our part? Are not the masses of people that have arisen in the great development

[1] *Social Solutions*, p. 366.

of the nineteenth century beginning to turn from Him, and to regard Him as mythical, or at least as merely a great man of a past age, who is incapable of giving answers to the burning questions of modern life? Who is prepared to deny that there are thousands, nay, rather, hundreds of thousands, who think so?[1]

Every man of intelligence and honesty to-day knows that it is so. It is greatly to be regretted that Christian churches in general do not more frankly face the facts which are here only too truly betokened. The policy of simply ignoring them is fraught with unmeasured danger to the Christianity of the future. The sentiments attributed recently to Sir Edward Russell, the veteran editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post*, deserve to be pondered by every Christian in the land. Says the report :—

They all had minds, and they ought all to have religion; and if they had religion, it was only through the mind that they had it, and it was only by the mind that they could keep it. Therefore, what the Christian Church wanted—and he thought it was more necessary to assert it now than it used to be, because things had taken a different turn—what all Christian communities wanted at present was rational and intellectual preaching, with thought and with view in it. Then they wanted hearers to match that preaching, and in order to cultivate them they must cultivate the mind. He would urge upon them that the mind was the vital factor in the creation of character, and in the development of religion within them. There was

[1] p. 27.

no other way, no other hope, no other manner of conforming themselves to the will of God—no other manner except to use the mind which He had graciously given them, in order that they might so employ it.

Alas, such counsels, it is to be feared, will not be heeded nearly as much as they deserve, by very many Christian churches. They will too often be dismissed as unspiritual, if not dangerous. Yet surely what they suggest is no more than the Apostle urged—'Brothers, do not be mentally childish; rather be babes in evil, but in mind be men.'

The following pages are but a humble and fractional contribution to what Christian teachers and Christian churches will have to do on a larger scale and with more skilled patience than ever before, if Christianity is to survive, let alone develop, in the coming years. Every other realm of human life and thought has now to examine itself, to prune off excrescences, to purge away errors, to re-establish foundations, to elevate ideals. There is no reason whatever why the Christian religion should escape the same winnowing process. The summary of the situation by Dr. Swete ought to commend itself to every Christian who desires living reality, rather than dying tradition or dead forms.

> It would be faithless to doubt that the modernizing of Theology which seems to have begun will, upon the whole, be equally productive of good. Something of the rich beauty of the ancient presentment of the faith may be lost in the process, and the period of transition must necessarily be

one of unrest and discomfort. But it needs no prophet to foresee that the time will come when ideas which to-day are strange and unwelcome will be seen to possess a beauty of their own, to be necessary to the completeness of truth, and to belong, no less than many which are long familiar, to the common treasury of the Kingdom of Heaven.[1]

In that spirit, then, and in no other, we may set ourselves to seek and find Christian reality actually existent in the restless and troubled, if not chaotic, environment of the opening Twentieth Century. Beyond all question it is here that men need, demand, and must have, reality, if Christianity is to be ere long anything more than a dwindling esoteric society. The most raucous outcry as well as cynical objection to Christianity, generally conceived, is that it has been a failure, and that its present alleged potency for good is unreal. The indictment of 'Philip Vivian' above quoted, we have seen, begins with the usual popular assumption of such writers—'The dismal failure of Christianity after nearly two thousand years' trial.' But it is as false and shallow as it is common. The writer knows, as well as we do, that Christianity has never yet been tried on the scale assumed; that it is certainly not a 'dismal' but only a comparative failure; that the reasons for even the comparative failure are perfectly clear, even though the results are tragic.

The alleged failure of Christianity may, for purposes of clear thought, be divided into two

[1] *Cambridge Theological Essays*, p. x.

portions. A double negation is forged against it. First, that it has not put an end to all human evil. Secondly, that it has not brought to pass all the utmost human good. The 'Golden Age,' *alias* the 'Millennium,' has not appeared. The pains and evils, the sufferings and crimes, of humanity are with us still. To judge, indeed, by the events of the past year, and the outlook of the moment, they show signs of increasing rather than diminishing. Both these allegations are tragically true. But from neither of them, nor from both together, does Christian unreality emerge as a necessary conclusion. This denial admits of demonstration for all minds that are open to evidence.

(1) As to the first. The assertion must suffice for the moment, and it will be justified in a following section, that the very demand that Christianity should put an end to all evil in a human world is so irrational as to show that those who make it are moved by 'malice aforethought,' rather than by philosophical acumen or ethical sincerity. In other words, both these allegations of failure which are supposed to show Christian unreality really recoil on those who make them. For neither of them rests upon a thinkable basis. Christianity, at best or worst, is first a system of beliefs, finding practical expression in ethical principles. To demand that as such it shall end all moral evil, and compel the human *summum bonum*, is sheer fatuity, whether ignorant or ill-natured. The philosophy which demands the impossible, condemns itself. There is ample room for reality in the comparative failure of Christianity to mould civilization. But the 'rationalism' which demands that—human nature

being what it is—men and women shall be at once and altogether prevented from all evil-doing, and driven to all well-doing, by any creed or set of principles, only demonstrates its own unworthiness, in that it does not face the greatest reality of all—the human personality. A skilful organ-builder may so control his pipes that they shall give forth no note that is out of tune. But no choirmaster living can so control his choir. Whether, for that reason, he should wish to turn them all into pipes, may be left for so-called 'Determinism' to answer.

But when, in face of both the accusations here considered, a measure, even a large measure, of failure is acknowledged, that is much more the beginning than the end of the inquiry whether in the realm of fact Christianity has proved, and is yet proving, real or unreal. For with all rightful regard to the intelligence and sincerity of modern anti-Christian propagandism, these four assertions admit of definite demonstration.

(1) That whatever be the comparative failure of Christianity, it has done, and is now doing, more towards the two great ends above contemplated, than any other religion.

(2) It has done, and is now doing, more than any form of irreligion.

(3) It has done, and is doing, when all the factors of the great problems are fairly taken into account, as much as could reasonably be expected.

(4) It is now doing more than any other influence in civilization, by way of contribution to the conquest of ill and the triumph of good.

The vast significance and scope of these assertions is not for a moment forgotten. Volumes rather

than pages are doubtless required for their demonstration. But the volumes are not lacking, and a summary may be as useful as possible. The landscape has its value for the seeing eye, as truly as the microscopic scrutiny of chlorophyll.

The historical grounds of Christian reality will be presently considered. Modern religious fears and sneers are largely based upon the conditions and events of to-day. These will sufficiently occupy us for the moment, without regard to what has been or will be.

Probably the main reason at present for calling in question the reality of Christian truth and influence is the general falling off in church attendance, along with corresponding decrease in church membership, and in Sunday-school numbers. These all are undoubtedly, from the Christian standpoint, as lamentable as they are undeniable. There would be no more wisdom than honesty in underrating the seriousness of the situation. The defection, however, is not as great as it seems to be, and there is special need that we should ask plainly what it all means. To put it in another form, does it mean that Christianity has at last been exploded as but a gaudy bubble, too unreal to be taken into further account—except, as good Bishop Butler suggested, 'by way of reprisals' for having so long imposed upon humanity? No risk of untruth is run in flatly contradicting that insinuation. When all respect has been paid to the modern mind, the great apparent falling away from conventional Christianity does not arise from reasoned, definite, organized conviction that it is all merely a foolish following of a monstrous 'will-o'-the-wisp,' but from a

variety of causes, no one of which, nor all of them together, can be truly taken as proof of Christian unreality.

To any suggestion of such unreality the answer which is at once simplest and most complex is to face the facts. What, then, is the actual position of Christianity to-day in the modern world? When we speak of 'Christendom,' what does it connote? There are two methods of estimation—numbers and influence. The former meets the query as to whether Christianity is succeeding—in the popular sense—or failing, developing or dying out. The latter answers the question as to whether its development has been, and now is, for good or ill—whether it is now a genuine benediction, or the opposite, to humanity.

(1) What are the facts, first of all, as to numerical position? No one with any moral perception proposes to take numbers as a test of truth. But they are a measure of reality; in precisely the same way as the five millions of Socialists in Germany testify to the reality of the convictions they hold, and the strength of the grip with which they maintain that reality. Numbers, in regard to any faith, show at least how many are reached, and in greater or less degree influenced, by that belief. It becomes necessary to give to this matter all the consideration it deserves, because the foes of Christianity are always trying to use it for purposes of condemnation. The general assertion is that there are at present more Buddhists than Christians in the world, whence the inference is drawn that Buddhism is worthier and more promising than Christianity. But the fact being false, the inference is worthless. The

latest statistics as given by Dr. Zeller, Director of the Statistical Bureau at Stuttgart, are, in summary, these. The world's population comprises some 1,550 millions. Of these, so far as religion is concerned, 535 millions are avowedly Christians; 121 millions Buddhists; 300 millions Confucians; 214 millions Hindus; 176 millions Moslems; 11 millions Jews. Much may, of course, be said as to the superficiality of very many who 'profess and call themselves Christians,' or of divergencies of belief between them But that is irrelevant, because it applies equally to all the other faiths. So far, therefore, as comparison in numbers is concerned, it remains incontrovertible that Christianity is the greatest religion on earth. Its reality in extent is beyond controversy.

We shall see presently what is the prospect of the future, both at home and abroad. Certainly the promise of Christian Foreign Missions was never as encouraging as now. There is no likelihood whatever that the check put upon them, as upon so much other good work, by this frightful European catastrophe, will be more than temporary. Indeed, the manifest, tragic, colossal failure of Nietzscheanism to do anything but flood the world with misery, cannot but impress humanity with the need of the opposite ideals—which are confessedly those of the Gospel of Christ. There is thus no possible question as to the reality of the present hold which Christianity has upon modern humanity.

As regards our own country, in which we are, of course, most deeply interested religiously as well as politically and socially, one great distinction has to be drawn, when alarmists, whether within the

Church or without, call attention to the comparative failure of Christianity and the diminishing numbers at church in public worship. However well grounded may be their fears relatively, they are quite unwarranted absolutely. It is doubtless a Christian tragedy that we are not keeping pace with the population, in proportion to its growth. There is also a difference between the unquestioning faith of our forefathers who knew no difficulties, and that of to-day. But there is another side. As a matter of simple fact, too real to admit of controversy, there are actually in our British midst in these days, more attendants than ever before at public worship; more definite church members; more young people attached to the churches; more efficient Sunday schools; an intenser zeal for all kinds of Christian service; a larger generosity in giving; a broader philanthropy; and a higher as well as more intelligent ideal of Christian character and conduct, than has ever existed before. It is thus not merely true, as the editor of the *Clarion* has acknowledged, that Christianity ' has the zealous service and unswerving credence of millions of honest and worthy citizens,' but that to-day there are actually more millions than ever, and they are showing, on the whole, a better spirit and a more real devotion than ever.

(2) Christian reality, however, as a present-day fact in the human world, does not consist in quantity so much as in quality. The main question is not how many avowed Christians there are, but what do they, as such, contribute to the world's wellbeing. Whether the Christian religion really comes from above and bespeaks a God of love

watching over mankind, or whether it is merely the delusion its opponents declare, may be largely decided by its effects on those who hold it; in other words, by its influence on human affairs. Anti-Christian advocates have not been slow to accept this challenge. They have vehemently denied that that influence has been or is for good. But in almost every case they either answer themselves, or misrepresent the facts for want of a fair judgement. Two instances will serve to typify many.

The most popular recent opponent of everything Christian quotes Mr. Chesterton as saying that 'Christianity has committed crimes so monstrous that the sun might sicken at them in heaven'; and then adds:—

> No one can refute that statement. But Christians evade the dilemma. When the evil works of their religion are cited, they reply that these evil works were wrought by false Christianity, that they were contrary to the teachings of Christ, and so were not the deeds of Christians at all.[1]

Here, plainly, the answer of the unbeliever is as true as the statement of the believer is false. The only comment needed is that those who profess to defend the Christian faith ought to learn to do it much more carefully. The opponent here is a Socialist, and if one were to say that Socialism has advocated notions 'so monstrous' that the world of respectable humanity vomits it out of consideration, who, so vehemently as he, would reply at once that Socialism is not to be charged with the excesses

[1] Mr. R. Blatchford, in the *Clarion*.

which some of its adherents advocate or practise? Even so is the statement utterly false, no matter by whom it is made, that 'Christianity has committed monstrous crimes.' Christianity has never yet committed any crime. Certain men and women have committed monstrous crimes in its name; but only because they were false to the name they bore, and trampled upon the principles they professed to hold. 'The worst is ever the corruption of the best' is a maxim which has been verified a myriad times. It would be as fair to charge Christ with all the horrors of the present European situation, as to attempt to fasten upon Christianity the responsibility for all the evils done under its name.

Let us take one other statement from the same source—preferably because it has been read more widely than any other—as a specimen of misrepresentation and self-contradiction in one.

> Let us look, then, for an instant at the truest and best form of Christianity, and ask what it is doing. It is preaching about Sin, Sin, Sin. It is praying to God to do for man what man *ought* to do for himself, what man can do for himself, what man must do for himself; for God has never done it and will never do it for him. And this fault in the Christian—the highest and truest Christian—attitude towards life does not lie in the Christians, it lies in the truest and best form of their religion.[1]

Plausible sophistries such as these have influenced far greater numbers than the churches acknowledge.

[1] *God and My Neighbour*, R. Blatchford, p. 183. This gross fallacy was exposed at the time in my *Clarion Fallacies*, but as very many still endorse the writer's 'claim' that his work is unanswerable, it is here once more shown to be false.

Yet they are as reprehensible as pitiful in their falsity. To represent the whole work and influence of the Christian churches in these realms as simply 'preaching about sin,' is nothing less than a huge lie. Whether moral evil needs to be preached about, the present state of Europe sufficiently testifies. But no church, anywhere, speaks only about sin. Every one knows that. Whilst as a simple but significant fact, the actual, practical, philanthropic work of all kinds done by Christian churches now, in one week, is greater than all that the unbelief which here so loftily declaims has done in all its history.

Moreover, in view of the large prevalence of the popular 'Determinism' which this writer ceaselessly advocates, it is worth while to point out his glaring self-contradiction. Here he asserts that man 'ought' to do something 'for himself.' But in other places he loudly declares that man can 'no more sin than a steam-engine'; that he cannot help anything he does; that 'if God is responsible for man's existence, God is responsible for man's acts.'

Leaving such pitiful fallacies for the moment out of account, it is something to have 'the truest and best form of Christianity' distinguished from the inconsistencies of Christians. We may, therefore, dismiss these latter, and estimate succinctly the influence of Christian reality in the light of current events and modern conditions.

The truth herein must be sought in three directions: at home; on the Continent; and on the Foreign Mission Field. It will be most convenient to take first the state of things in Continental

Europe. To attempt this in detail, in a few pages, would be folly. But the general truth as to Christian reality—or otherwise—may be as truthfully as briefly summarized.

I

It is inevitable just now that we should consider primarily the case of Germany. That the German nation, as represented by its rulers, has made itself the curse of Europe and the incarnation of civilized evil, is beyond question, when all the facts of international relations during the last fifty years are placed side by side with the abominations of the past eighteen months. How it has all come about, is only too easy to see. The influence of Bismarck, Nietzsche, Treitschke, Chamberlain, Bernhardi, and 'the men around the Kaiser,' is so well known as to need no restatement here. Practically, it is only too true that the whole German Empire has come to be of their mind. To that mind is due the welter of blood and woe which now submerges Europe. What, then, are we to make of the general reference to Germany as 'a Christian nation'? Only this: that it is not true. Had it been Christian, there would have been no war. If we may believe the testimony of Dr. Smith in his instructive volume on *The Soul of Germany*—and he exhibits abundant warrant for our so doing—then, in spite of the Kaiser's pious rodomontade, and the manifestoes of University Professors, the whole case is summed thus briefly:—

Germany, however, deserves the pity of all those who still believe that Christianity is the greatest

civilizing force of which this world can boast. For Germans, the Christian Church is merely a civil-service department, commanding no one's reverence. The upper classes are intellectual materialists, and the lower ranks the victims of Germany's new religion—Social Democracy.[1]

If any suspicion should remain that this estimate is unfair, because English, we may confirm it by testimony which must be impartial. In his well-known book General Bernhardi speaks thus of the 'Evangelical religious instruction' in his country:—

> Not a word suggests that the real meaning of religion—its influence, that is, on the moral conduct of man—should be brought into prominence. The teacher is not urged by a single syllable to impress religious ideas on the receptive child mind; the whole course of instruction, in conformity with regulations, deals with a formal religiosity which is quite out of touch with practical life, and if not deliberately, at least in result, renounces any attempt at moral influence. A real feeling for religion is seldom the fruit of such instruction; the children, as a rule, are glad after their confirmation to have done with this unspiritual teaching, and so they remain, when their schooling is over, permanently strangers to the religious inner life which the instruction never awakened in them. Nor does the instruction for confirmation do much to alter that, for it is usually conceived in the same spirit.[2]

No further explanation is necessary as to the lamentable unreality of the general German pro-

[1] p. 85. [2] *Germany and the Next War*, p. 250.

fession of Christianity. Yet one cannot but be assured that amongst seventy millions of people there are numbers of truly devout souls, whose unknown but real fidelity to the mind of Christ constitutes the only hope for something better in the future than the amazing and lamentable utterances of those who should be teachers.[1] For detailed account of these, other occasions must be found. It is only too sadly true, that the utterances of leading Theological Professors and Pastors in Germany, during these last eighteen months, are far more harmful to the Christian religion than all the materialism of the intellectuals, or the virulent anti-Christianism of the Social Democracy. It is a pitiful confession that as far as Germany is concerned, Christian reality is but a hope of the future.

The Russian form of Christian beliefs is, of course, not such as any Protestant can wholly approve. But he must be blind indeed who does not see in

[1] It is hardly surprising that the truculent falsity of Professor Haeckel's invectives should have alienated even his 'Rationalist' friends in this country. But it is astounding that men like Eucken and Harnack should have followed in his steps. At the moment, the two latest utterances on war and religion from Germany are those of a Professor and a Pastor, both well known and highly esteemed in that land.

Professor Seeberg, of Berlin University, is the leading Professor of New Testament exegesis, who, in the name of Christianity, insists that 'war is a work of love, and a renewer of idealism in our hearts, and as that which pours iron into the blood of men.' He reiterates, as usual, the lie that the German nation has been attacked and only wants to defend itself, and informs the world that when the War is over—this War which on Germany's part is 'clearly a work of brotherly Christian love'—German friendship and love will have to be sought for by the other nations. Compared with this pious drivel Nietzsche's diatribes are harmless to Christian faith.

But Pastor Lober, of Leipzig, leaves even Professor Seeberg behind These sentiments of his are issued to the world under the name of

the present religious attitude of that great nation something more than hope. However adulterated their Christian ideals and ceremonies may seem from any Evangelical standpoint, a nation that can more than cheerfully submit to the sudden and costly removal of the vodka curse, and then on behalf of a little oppressed people do and bear all it has done during these awful months, must have some reality in that Christian profession which they universally make. There is nothing more hopeful in Europe than the inner history of the Russian nation during recent years. There is every reason to believe that the promise of greater reality in all that is ethically and socially Christian will be fulfilled.

France, we know, as represented by Paris and the greater cities, is not Christian. But neither is it as godless as anti-Christian writers seek to make out. The form of piety of the French peasantry may be childlike in its simplicity, but at least it was real enough to dispose them to pay the enormous war indemnity of which Germany robbed their country after the disaster of 1870. If this were the place, it

Christianity. 'Every one serves God who makes the blood of the enemy flow, and it is because he is thus serving God that he can reckon on God's blessing. In war evil must be met by evil, and whenever possible by greater and increased evil. War demands Old Testament severity, not the mildness of the new dispensation. He is to be praised and envied who sees his enemies perish. We beflag our houses, we ring our bells and sing "Nun danket alle Gott," when countless multitudes of Russians meet a terrible death in the Masurian swamps, or when two thousand seamen (*sic*) are plunged to the bottom of the ocean by our submarines. And such expressions of gratitude and joy are genuinely German, and genuinely Christian.' In face of such utterances there is, alas, only too much cause for the enemies of Christianity to rejoice. But if this were Christianity, then would hell be heaven.

would not be difficult to point out many noble traits of the French people which are unalterably associated with Christian principles and practices. Nor can there be any doubt that one result of the present fearful struggle will be to move that great nation far more really towards than away from genuine Christian faith, whatever becomes of clericalism.

As for Belgium, if it be acknowledged on the one hand that Romanism, as the national religion, is from the New Testament standard faulty in many respects, yet, on the other, a Christian profession which has produced such a national heroism for truth and right, against falsity and brutal might, as the last year has witnessed, cannot be devoid of reality. If character is, as the New Testament maintains, the test of spiritual reality under all forms and avowals of faith, then assuredly Belgian religion will not be found wanting in the divine account. Their noble King and Queen, who have immortalized themselves by their fearless devotion and unmeasured self-sacrifice, would be the first to own that in playing their part in the great tragedy they were only following out those principles of truth and honour and fidelity to duty, which they had been ever taught to revere under the sanctions of their Christian faith.[1] The future for their poor desolated land, ground at present under the worse than brutal heel of German savagery, is hard to contemplate. But again there can be little doubt to any unprejudiced mind that, in spite of all their anguish and loss, they will only be confirmed in the righteousness of the stand they made. It is indubitable that they will much rather abide by

[1] See Phil. iv. 8.

the essentially Christian principles which led them to make it, than turn away to the Nietzschean maxims incarnated in their mighty but immoral foes.

It is inevitable that some reference should be made to the Pope and his influence at the present crisis. Profound indeed has been the disappointment that so powerful an institution as the Vatican should have done so little, either to prevent war or to vindicate those principles of truth and honour and compassion which lie at the heart of Christian reality. It has not even protested against all the 'knavish tricks' and infernal atrocities on the German side, which are absolutely inexcusable, from any honourable conduct of war, let alone from the Christian standpoint. Whilst, however, it cannot be conceded here that the general doctrines and practices of Rome represent the mind of Christ and His Apostles, two things must in fairness be remembered. First, that there are myriads of truly and nobly devout souls in the Roman communion, who exemplify all the best features of Christian reality. Secondly, that there are, unfortunately, vast numbers of Romish adherents on both sides of the conflict, making it practically impossible for the Pope to do much more than express his sorrow, and we have no reason to doubt that his grief is sincere. The cunning of the Kaiser's policy towards Rome is merely a replica of his fawning upon Islam.

There can be neither wisdom nor honesty in attempting to conceal the fact that, on the Continent, the whole situation is as grave from the Christian as from the political standpoint. No man can

predict what will follow the awful struggle now in progress. The many and irreconcilable vaticinations of professed interpreters of Biblical prophecy may be dismissed *en masse* as meriting no serious regard. The one religious certainty is, that Britain will have more opportunity and responsibility for the conservation and development of all that can truly be termed Christian, after the curse is lifted, than any other country in the world. For which reason we will confine our attention for the rest of this brief survey to these realms alone.

II

With comparatively little difference, the same conditions prevail religiously in this country as across the Channel. Human nature is the same, and national idiosyncrasies do not greatly affect the main questions which circle around the acceptance or rejection of Christian beliefs. It is as easy in our midst as in Continental nations, to point out failures and criticize conduct, whether of churches or of individuals. But modern civilization is nothing if not a mixture of discordant elements, and these cannot rationally—or philosophically—be expected to melt into the calm sweetness of ideal Christian character, just because Christianity happens to be the generally accepted religion of a country. After dismissing the question of numbers, it remains to ask what is the actual influence of the Christianity which is at least so largely professed by the people of these realms. Is it tangible enough, good enough, great enough, vigorous enough, promising enough, to deserve notice as pointing definitely to Christian

reality in our modern midst? The reasons for answering such an inquiry with an unhesitating affirmative are, in brief statement, as follows.

The suggested division of Christianity into 'organized' and 'diffused' may be accepted as true to fact, but it must on no account be taken as indicating at the same time a division into real and unreal religion. Christian reality may unquestionably inhere in both. Christ's own searching question warns us against attaching too much importance to profession, however definite. 'Which of the two did the will of his father?' asked He of the chief priests and elders in His parable. And they had to own that it was the son who had made no promise at all, but openly refused obedience. Nor can any words ever be plainer than His warning that all who do wrong will find no excuse in their having called Him 'Lord.' So may we learn that those greatest realities for which Christianity stands are found often most genuinely in unlikely places.

The utmost that can be said with truth is, that in the churches, taken as a whole, Christian reality is visible and measurable, whilst outside them, it is immeasurable because invisible, though often none the less actual. Principal Selbie has well said recently:—

> There is plenty of religion left, though it may not take the form of the Christianity of the churches. I am not sure if it is not sometimes a higher and a holier thing. If men and women of all classes have been able to rise to real heights of self-sacrifice, and to prefer the austere ideals of duty and service to safety, ease, and even life itself; if in the time of crisis among a people that had

become to all appearance materialistic and pleasure-loving, the shirkers and the self-indulgent are found to be but an insignificant minority, does not all this mean that not only the heart of the people is sound, but that the impulses and sanctions of true religion have not lost their ancient power?

Many more testimonies to the same effect might be culled in these days from any fair, let alone sympathetic, observation of what is transpiring. As Dr. Selbie has added:—

> Not long ago most of us would have assented to the judgement that the youth of this country had become soft and self-indulgent, and given up to pleasure and material ends. But to-day we take all that back. The call of duty came, 'stern daughter of the voice of God,' bidding men face hardship and toil, wounds and death. The way in which the manhood of our Empire has leapt to meet the call is the most wonderful and solemn thing that the world has ever seen. It needed but the great occasion to show what spirit they were of. Now there is a lesson here for the Christian Church.

There is indeed. It is a double lesson. Not only shall we need 'to widen our outlook and abandon some cherished traditions,' but to revise and enlarge our theologies, at the very same time as the churches recognize the gravity of the responsibility which inevitably falls upon them. After all, 'diffused' Christianity depends, to an extent which can no more be denied than measured, upon organized Christianity. As truly as the light of day does not create the sun but comes from it, so does all the

real though immeasurable good of Christian influence outside churches and their creeds derive from that central body of Christian truth of which churches are the natural and necessary custodians.

The modern cynic has no easier task than pointing out the failures of the churches and the faults of civilization. He may be left to his unenviable work, as we should leave the man who spent his days in declaring that there were great spots on the sun, whilst utterly ignoring its light and heat. For whatever the audacity or persistence of certain forms of modern unbelief, the contention of Dean Henson admits of substantial verification.

> When it is seriously attempted to disentangle the different constituents of civilization as we know it, and to identify the specific effect of each one, it is found that exactly the best things are traceable to Christ's religion, and the worst things are clearly derived from other sources.[1]

What are the 'best things'? Let us take an estimate which may be all the truer for having been publicly announced long before we were involved in European disaster. More than thirty years ago Mr. G. Loring Brace issued this challenge to the world of honest thought :—

> There are certain practices, principles, and ideals —now the richest inheritance of the race—that have been either implanted, or stimulated, or supported by Christianity.
>
> They are such as these : regard for the personality of the weakest and poorest ; respect for

[1] *Notes on Popular Rationalism*, p. 111.

woman; the absolute duty of each member of the fortunate class to raise up the unfortunate; humanity to the child, the prisoner, the stranger, the needy, and even the brute; unceasing opposition to all forms of cruelty, oppression, and slavery; the duty of personal purity, and the sacredness of marriage; the necessity of temperance; the obligation of a more equitable division of the profits of labour, and of greater co-operation between employers and employed; the right of every human being to have the utmost opportunity of developing his faculties, and of all persons to enjoy equal political and social privileges; the principle that the injury of one nation is the injury of all; the expediency and duty of unrestricted trade and intercourse between all countries; finally and principally, a profound opposition to war, a determination to limit its evils when existing, and to prevent its arising by means of international arbitration. Ideals, principles, and practices, such as these, are among the best achievements of Christianity.[1]

The intervening years have only served to emphasize the truth and enhance the significance of this list. But it is necessary to bear well in mind two definite considerations hereupon. Every item in this suggested list is openly denied by the unbelief that styles itself 'Rationalism'; whilst some of them have been only very imperfectly exhibited by sincere Christians, and others have been utterly contemned by merely nominal Christians.

It is here neither necessary nor possible to cite the exact words in which modern anti-Christian virulence has reversed Dean Henson's claim, denied to

[1] *Gesta Christi*, p. vi.

Christianity every ameliorating influence in our present-day life, and ascribed to 'Humanism' all that gives comfort in the present or hope for the future. But so it is. The practice of churches and ordinary Christian teachers simply to ignore all such spoken and printed criticism becomes every year less useful and more dangerous. They are not ignored, but borne continually in mind in the pages that follow.

The failures of professing Christians to be true to their principles do not concern us for the moment. We have to do with the best, not the worst, of Christian results. No amount of failure from the highest invalidates the witness of those best results of Christian reality which are now blessing humanity, and are promising to do so more than ever in the coming days.

We can but summarize. Yet a truthful summary will always welcome further scrutiny when occasion offers.

(1) Wherein, then, does that Christian faith which is to-day too real to be dismissed as either inoperative or passing away, consist? Its main convictions are alike unmistakable and, as facts, undeniable. A firm belief in God as the one immanent and transcendent Cause of all; the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the revelation of the Fatherhood of God, with all that that conception connotes; the moral nature and dignity of man as the child of God, whose alienation from the Father Jesus gave Himself by life, teaching, suffering, death, resurrection, to repair; the consequent responsibility of human nature, and reality of sin; the possibility of such restoration to communion with God the Father

through Christ, as will save men from evil's consequences both here and hereafter, and bring to pass through holy character a true and noble brotherhood; thus making this life well worth living for every human being, and then adding such an assurance of a higher and nobler life to come, as robs death of its terrors and adds unmeasured hope to the zest of the present.

That is the general theoretic or doctrinal foundation of Christian reality, as held in to-day's world by nearly one-third of the human race. The many variations of form and substance with which it is confessedly held no more affect the reality of the whole, than the endless differences in size and shape of a vast tree's twigs and leaves affect the actuality and nature of its total growth; or than the varieties in the individual opinions of devotees of some modern cult—say, Socialism—affect the main ideals for which it stands. The world-wide followers of Jesus have undoubtedly differing conceptions of many things, theological oppositions, utterly unlike religious forms and habits; but all these comport with reality of faith. They are all one in those ultimate sanctions, unmistakable standards, strongest motives, sources of obligation, present ideals, and final hopes, in which Christianity is quite distinct from all other religions on earth.

Our next inquiry must be what is actually resulting from this general adhesion to Christian principles, in our own midst, and across the seas. First, then, what have we in Great Britain? The following, at least, may be truthfully maintained.

(2) Vast numbers of men, women, and children are being held under these beliefs in co-operation

for good, by churches of all kinds and degrees of influence. The many and great distinctions of creed and government do not count here; for in the main sanctions already summarized, they are one. It is scarcely necessary, save for the sake of being concretely real, to recount them. If, as a summary, we accept Dr. Denney's suggestion above mentioned—'I believe in God through Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord'—all the differing 'bodies' would adopt it. Anglicans, Romanists, Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Quakers, and other less known smaller sections of believers, would all claim, we know, to put their own construction upon the words. But their general acceptance would be no less real. What the consequent co-operation for good connotes will be seen as we proceed.

(3) Next to association in churches, must come the estimate of Christian reality in that home life which is undoubtedly the safeguard of civilization. No one in these days would say that the home life of unbelievers is necessarily unworthy or unhappy. Nor would any one who knows human nature venture to assert that all avowedly Christian homes are little heavens. Yet a double fact remains, viz. (i.) that Christianity does give to home life, as an ideal, a sanctity, an idiosyncrasy of sweetness, a standard of unselfish character, a speciality of blessed communion, for which there are no words—only they who have experienced it know it; and (ii.) that this ideal is every day being actually realized in untold myriads of cases. As it is said, without fear of contradiction, that there is no country in the world like our own for the deep

sweet strength with which 'Home, sweet home' holds the hearts of our people, so it may be avowed, with equal truth, that no homes in our midst are as sweet as those in which Spitta's words are not only sung, but felt :—

> O happy home where Thou art loved the dearest,
> Thou loving Friend and Saviour of our race ;
> And where among the guests there never cometh
> One who can hold such high and honoured place.

(4) The beautifulness of home life necessarily depends upon the sanctity of marriage, whereby alone any lofty ideal of family relationships can be maintained. Upon this, as an evidence of Christian reality, there is, happily, no need to dwell. For without pressing that sanctity into the pitiless moulds of the Romish or High Anglican traditions which would make divorce mechanically impossible, two things here again are true beyond controversy, viz. first, that the New Testament ideal of marriage is—when all is fairly taken into account—such as would bless humanity more than any other ; and secondly, that Christian churches do strive to maintain it to the uttermost.

But the sacred sweetness of family life and the sanctity of marriage are themselves based upon deeper considerations which must be looked for in theory, and are incontrovertibly found in fact. These are, the moral and spiritual estimate of human nature in general, together with the specific value of the human unit irrespective of age or sex. Each of these fully merits distinct recognition.

(5) The very protests of 'Rationalism' connote the double truth that the Christian estimate of

human nature is the highest, and is—at all events in Western civilization—the most largely accepted. No better exhibition of this—*per contra*—can be found than the well-known words of Professor Haeckel in his *Riddle of the Universe*.

> Our own human nature, which exalted itself into an image of God in its anthropistic illusion, sinks now to the level of a placental mammal, which has no more value for the universe at large than the ant, the fly of a summer's day, the microscopic infusorium, or the smallest bacillus. Humanity is but a transitory phase of an eternal substance, a particular phenomenal form of matter and energy, the true proportion of which we soon perceive when we set it on the background of infinite space and eternal time.[1]

Against this dictum, which is surely anything but inspiring, we may well place the estimate of the Psalmist, now happily restored to its right sense, in the eighth Psalm—a Psalm of admiration, not of contempt—in the well-warranted Revised rendering —' Thou hast made him but little lower than God.' And this is endorsed on all occasions, only a few of which are known to us, by Christ Himself. ' How much is a man of more value than a sheep ! '—' Ye are of more value than birds.'—' The very hairs of your head are all numbered.' Perhaps the contrast between the two ideal estimates of human nature which belong to belief and unbelief respectively may be most succinctly expressed by suggesting a reply to the following, which appeared a year

[1] Cheap Edition, p. 87. The title of Haeckel's original work is *Die Welträthsel*.

or two ago in *The Agnostic Annual.*[1] If we put the 'Rationalist' estimate on the left, and the Christian on the right, it may help the comparison. What is the true estimate of the worth of human nature and human life?

A shadow that passes
Along thirsty grasses,
A brief fungus, fretting
The face of the earth.
A pitiful blunder,
A jest, and a wonder:
A laugh from the darkness,
A groan from the dearth.

A babe that emerges
From darkness to light,
Heaven's love-pledge that urges
To everything bright.
Sweet childhood's inspiring
To noble endeavour,
Youth's joys all untiring,
With hopes fading never.

A cradle to cry in,
A coffin to lie in,
Betwixt them I steal
Through the fun of the fair,
Chance calling, fate guiding,
Life's roundabout gliding,
Until the Grey Dustman
Surprises me there.

Manhood developed through fighting for right;
Womanhood crowned in love's gentle might;
Heart-strength and purity, blended with peace;
Homes filled with tenderness; friendship's increase.
Christ's own assuring that life is God's plan;
Death but the passing to measureless gain. F. B.

There is good warrant for affirming that the contrast here suggested is alike fair in theoretical representation, and, on the Christian side at least, in myriads of cases, embodied in fact.

(6) When we pass in thought, as is inevitable, from the general to the particular, from humanity to the human unit, the question becomes—what does Christian reality mean to-day in regard to

[1] Since then renamed as *The R.P.A. Annual.*

individual men, women, and children? It is, of course, impossible wholly to exclude the past. But if we concern ourselves with the modern condition of the human unit, then three matters demand truthful estimate, viz. the abolition of slavery, the status of woman, the estimate of the child.

(i.) As to slavery. The old reproach on the lips of Secularism, that Christianity did not abolish slavery, nor does the New Testament condemn it, has been abundantly answered. The summary of the case in Dr. Wayland's *Elements of Moral Science* admits of no denial.

> The very course which the Gospel takes upon this subject seems to have been the only one that could have been taken in order to effect the universal abolition of slavery. If it had forbidden the evil instead of subverting the principle; if it had proclaimed the unlawfulness of slavery and taught slaves to resist the oppression of their masters, it would instantly have arrayed the two parties in deadly hostility throughout the civilized world. Its announcement would have been the signal of servile war, and the very name of the Christian religion would have been forgotten amidst the agitations of bloodshed.

Students of Roman history know what the Servile Wars did for the slaves. And we know that the leading spirits in the abolition of modern black slavery were Christian men definitely actuated by the Christian spirit. All the cavils of anti-Christian writers do not avail to lessen the substantial truth of that avowal, whether in Great Britain, or amongst the Federals in the great American War. That the

attitude of the South was not Christian, in spite of their assumptions, any more than the behaviour of some prominent Christian teachers, is sufficiently manifest in the New Testament. Its attitude towards that inalienable right of every human being to his liberty, on the grounds of such brotherly kinship and love as make slavery wholly unthinkable, is beyond controversy.

The same applies to all the lamentably real white slavery of our 'advanced' civilization. Whatever fault may justly be found with organized churches in the past, for ignoring the sacred rights of labour and the tragic needs as well as undoubted rights of the proletariat, two things are unmistakable. First, that the churches, with exceptions that may well be negligible, are entering into an apprehension of Christian reality in these respects, more clearly and pronouncedly than ever before. Secondly, that in all the philanthropic movements which now aim at both the cure and prevention of suffering through social injustice or tyranny, a preponderating share has been taken by men of definitely Christian principles, and from avowedly Christian motives. Whilst in regard to that palliation of human misery which in our day is as pitifully necessary as it is economically insufficient, repetition may be called in to emphasize what is too often overlooked. Facts will be cited in a moment which entirely warrant the avowal above made, that modern Christian churches, with all their imperfections, are now doing in one week more Good-Samaritan work than unbelief has done in the whole course of its history.

(ii.) Again; as to the estimate of womanhood, and the social position of women. No subject is of

greater importance to-day, practically as well as morally and spiritually. For the fuller discussion which it merits, reference must be made to other works.[1] Here we have only space to make assertions which are, however, for that very reason, the more carefully guarded, and founded on fact. It goes without saying that when the Bishop of London publicly affirmed that ' the Gospel has given woman the position she holds to-day,' it would be pounced upon by the never-sleeping vigilance of modern unbelief, and held up to scorn as clerical falsity ' Nothing could very well be more contrary to fact,' says ' Philip Vivian ' in his specious *Churches and Modern Thought.* But if the Christian affirmation is not to be taken on trust, most assuredly neither are the Secularist denials.

For the estimate of present-day Christian reality. it is wasted labour to ransack history for material wherewith to extol Roman, Greek, or Pagan civilizations, and to pour contempt on early Christianity. If these exhumations from the past were all justified—which certainly they are not—they would not affect, let alone annul, present-day reality. Nor is it of any avail to make keenly selected quotations from some of the Christian ' Fathers,' who were misogynists in spite of their Christianity. It is definitely reprehensible when

[1] The following will be useful from the Christian standpoint :— Article on ' Woman,' by Professor Adeney, in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*; Storr's *Divine Origin of Christianity*, pp. 146–153; Schmidt's *Social Results of Early Christianity*, pp. 27–62, 188–211; G. L. Brace's *Gesta Christi*, pp. 271–319; *Christianity and Womanhood*, by Miss Birstall, B.A., late Scholar of Girton College, Cambridge, and Head Mistress of Manchester High School for Girls (published by Methodist Publishing House in *Is Christianity True ?*); *Christianity and Woman*, by J. E. Gun (C. H. Kelly, London).

writers, who cannot help knowing better, print that 'Christianity in adopting the Old Testament (*sic*) adopted with it the Hebrew conception of woman.' The writer of that statement makes large profession of studious sincerity, and yet refuses to see how Christ's whole attitude falsifies his assertion. Any advocacy which is driven to such means, or to quoting the *Vicar of Crantock* as a fair specimen of modern Christian teaching, or to putting greatest emphasis upon some of Paul's Rabbinic proclivities, shows itself to be nothing more than sinister special pleading. As the present writer has elsewhere said—'Paul himself clearly distinguishes between his personal opinions and the authority of his Gospel, and not only expressly guards some of his judgements by reference to the special trials and necessities of that particular age, but in strongest terms lays down general principles which, if obeyed, would make earth to be a heaven for women no less than for men.'

Again; when it is made plain that the Middle Age treatment of woman was due, not to the Christianity which embodies Christ's spirit, but to the bastard form of faith which only masqueraded under that name, then the modern cynic, not to be beaten, affirms that 'Even the Reformation altered more than it improved the condition of woman. How could it be otherwise, when the reformers were nothing if not Bibliolaters?'[1] So, once more, shows itself the disingenuousness of 'Rationalism.' For what is here thus calmly assumed is that Bibliolatry and Christianity are identical. And every such writer knows that that is false. There is, however,

[1] *Churches and Modern Thought*, P. Vivian, p. 285.

no need to plead in defence of the dignity, the purity, the nobility, of Puritan womanhood. Well indeed would it be for modern Europe, especially for the Paris and Berlin which Rationalism extols, if the standard and estimate of woman adopted by the Reformers were endorsed and practised.[1]

But although every educated man knows to-day that Christianity does not involve 'Bibliolatry,' there is yet room for another view of this matter. Is the Salvation Army pledged to the 'verbal inspiration' which is the very core of 'Bibliolatry'? It would certainly seem so. What, then, have they learned to think and speak and do from their faith, in regard to womanhood? Let the late General Booth answer:—

> Every officer and soldier should hold to it that woman is as important, as valuable, as capable, and as necessary to the progress and happiness of the world as man. The Salvation Army has done, and is doing, something to combat the hideous and heathen notions which treated woman as a mere plaything, a piece of property, a slave in everything but name. Taken as a whole, I maintain that woman is equal to man in the value of her gifts and the extent of her influence, and if she be given a fair chance she will prove it to be so. Every man to whom has been entrusted a wife must champion her interests, fight her battles, watch over her soul, and even die, if need be, as Christ died, on her behalf.

[1] Germany to-day is, as every one knows, half unchristian, half bitterly anti-Christian. According to P. Vivian and the R.P.A., it ought, therefore, to be a Paradise for women. If the reader will consult Dr. T. F. A. Smith's *Soul of Germany*, pp. 5, 6, &c., and *Degenerate Germany*, by Henry de Halsalle—*passim*—he will be able to appreciate—*per contra*—what is meant by Christian womanhood.

If that be the attitude of 'Bibliolatry' it is an unmeasured pity that modern Europe has not more of it. At all events it is a fair and true general statement of the estimate and attitude of the New Testament. Save that Paul, for all his Rabbinism, went farther. He cannot have forgotten what he must have known, that it was to a woman[1] that his Master had unfolded the sublimest doctrine of God the world had ever heard, or has ever since conceived. It was with that, as well as all the rest of his faith, thrilling him through, that he uttered the Magna Charta of woman's liberty, and honour, and hope, as long as the world lasts :—

> You are all sons of God through your faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ, thereby clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no more Jew or Greek, no more slave or freeman, no more male or female ; for in Christ Jesus you all are one.[2]

Seeing that anti-Christian writers are never tired of referring to Japan as exhibiting the superiority of their principles, it may be worth a moment's while to note its estimate and treatment of women. Professor Nitobé, of the University of Kyoto, is an impartial witness, when he writes

[1] Not to 'the woman,' as the Old Version misleadingly puts it. The disciples (see John iv. 27) were not astonished that their Master was talking to that particular woman. But they were amazed that He, a Rabbi, should stoop to talk to any woman, and most of all upon religious matters. Is this one of the instances in which, according to 'Philip Vivian,' Christ 'adopted' the Old Testament? Every student of Jewish matters knows the contrary. See also p. 142 below.

[2] Gal. iii. 26–28.

concerning the acknowledged inferiority of womanhood :—

> In the ascending scale of service stood woman, who annihilated herself for man that he might annihilate himself for the master, that he in turn might obey Heaven. I know the weakness of this teaching, and that the superiority of Christianity is nowhere more manifested than here, in that it requires of each and every living soul direct responsibility to the Creator.[1]

This will be best appreciated in the light thrown on it by Mr. W. E. Griffis in his excellent work *Dux Christus : An Outline Study of Japan.*

> The daughter of the Japanese family has at the age of twenty but little development of her higher nature, very little indeed of the uplifting of the soul into the atmosphere above the routine of daily life. On the other hand, her master, man, pushing the principles of feminine obedience to the serving of his own selfishness, crushes out by trampling upon the most noble of feminine instincts. To satisfy his own needs, he degrades a glorious principle into the depths of damnable abomination. A father in debt, an ambitious brother to get an education in order to win office, will sell the body of daughter or sister, even as the beasts are sold. Horribly significant is the proverb—' A father with many daughters need not fear poverty in old age.[2]

As against such an ideal, even Mr. Edward Clodd acknowledges that ' Christianity treated woman as the spiritual equal of man.' Whilst Professor

[1] *Bushido, The Soul of Japan*, p. 147. [2] p. 204.

Seeley, in his well-known *Ecce Homo*, does not hesitate to say that 'the female sex, in which antiquity saw nothing but inferiority, was understood for the first time by Christ. His treatment brought out its characteristics, its superiorities, its peculiar power of gratitude and self-devotion,' and so gave 'a new prominence and dignity' to womanhood.

In his excellent little monograph, Mr. Gun has thus summarized the effect of Christianity on the position of woman:—

I. Christianity taught the spiritual equality of both sexes.

II. Christianity insisted that purity was as much incumbent upon men as women.

III. Christianity maintained that marriage was a sacred and permanently binding contract.

IV. Christianity fought the current evil of easy divorce.

V. Christianity improved the legal status of women.

VI. Christianity enlisted in its service large numbers of the noblest women, to whom it gave unique opportunities for exercising those virtues which supremely characterized their sex.

How does Christian reality stand to-day in these respects? Is there any room for honest doubt? What are we to think of the self-vaunting 'Rationalism' which asks in our midst—'Where in Christendom can a lady be left for days and nights alone in a tent, or an open house?'[1] If this writer does not know, at least every reader of these pages does,

[1] *The Churches and Modern Thought*, 'P. Vivian,' p. 289.

that in this country, whatever its imperfections, there is no limit to the occasions where the honour of womanhood is as safe as with the angels. And more, that if there be any place where it is not safe, it is because those who dwell there have forsaken their Christianity, and taken up and act upon some form or degree of unbelief. No less false and unworthy is the insinuation that it is 'chiefly women who are now the mainstay of Christian faith.' The 'Rationalism' which is driven to utilize falsities of this description, manifestly condemns itself.

In a word, then, it may be avowed that as regards the estimate and status of womanhood, Christian reality to-day is clearer, broader, more chivalrous, and truer to the mind of Jesus Christ, than ever before. Whether other influences than ecclesiastical or theological have contributed to this result is irrelevant. Christian teachers and churches have always had, and still have, much to unlearn as well as to learn. But that does not in the least detract from the truth that in the present age it is Christ's estimate of womanhood which is triumphing over that of either Judaism or Nietzscheanism; the mind of Christendom is being more enlightened and enlarged according to that estimate; in all Christian countries greater emphasis than ever is put upon the purity and chivalry which set woman upon her rightful throne; a higher appreciation of her ecclesiastical, social, and political influence is continually growing; the lower estimates of Paganism, along with those of Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, Brahminism, and Shintoism, are being set aside through Christian Missions. So that it is scarcely possible to formulate a falser statement,

or a greater slander, than that issued by the 'Rationalist' press—that 'Christianity has done much to lower, and but little to elevate the position of woman.' Whether at home or abroad, Christianity is doing more than any other religion or philosophy on earth to honour, protect, and develop womanhood; and the modern world is responding to its ideals.

(iii.) There has never been any honest room to challenge the loftiness of Christianity's estimate of the sacredness and value of child life. That sacredness, indeed, characterizes the whole of the Old Testament, and shines out against the Spartan practices which anticipated Nietzsche. But it was Christ Himself who, when He folded the little ones in His arms, crowned them with a halo of preciousness to which nothing can be added. Even Gibbon acknowledges the extent to which the early Christians learned of their Master, and rescued numberless infants whom Paganism had doomed to death. His own note, moreover, applauds the modern Christians, who still do the same in heathen countries, in such cases, for instance, as Peking, where 'above three thousand new-born infants are annually exposed.' What Christian missionaries in general have done and are yet doing for children in other lands, no tongue can tell, nor any statistics truly show. In civilized countries we know that education has now become a definite and growing ideal. But anti-Christian Rationalists have no warrant whatever for seeking to accredit this whole movement to mere civilization. They might as well attribute all modern philanthropy to German 'kultur.' It is but a modern development of that

lofty estimate of child life from which the Church, even in its darkest times, has never declined. It has never forgotten its Master's word—'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones.' Its deep conviction, learned from Him, as to the unspeakable value of the individual soul, compelled its passionate protest alike against the ancient Pagan slaughter of the innocents, and the modern cruelty which was crushing childhood under a Juggernaut car of so-called 'industrialism.' It was largely, almost wholly, due to the labours of a Christian Earl in these realms, that the Factory Acts were passed, and other measures adopted for the protection and appreciation of child life. How far human and parental instincts—even under our 'advanced' civilization—are from being sufficient for such purpose, the records of the S.P.C.C. bear ghastly witness. There is no such guarantee on earth for the health and happiness of childhood as the stern emphasis which Christianity puts upon the sanctity of marriage, and the consequent sacredness of family life. The euphemism which talks of a 'love-child,' excuses the passion of the parents at the cost almost always of the suffering and misery of the child. But Christianity has not only protested against such sinners; it has done more than any other system of religion or philosophy, to pity and help the little ones that are thus sinned against. Neither ancient Paganism nor modern 'Rationalism' can show such tender and practical appreciation of the preciousness of child life as is shown in the noble institutions known as Müller's Orphanage at Bristol, the National Children's Home, and Dr. Barnardo's Home for Children. These are wholly

Christian efforts, and the total benediction which through them has come to thousands of young lives will never be told, for it is simply immeasurable.

As for the modern Sunday school, its work is alike beyond praise and beyond measurement. The feeble imitation of it by anti-Christian Socialist Sunday schools is but a small tribute to the potency for good of an institution which has not only done more than any other effort towards the conservation of Christianity in general, but has unquestionably put a protecting and ennobling mark upon the young life of this nation altogether beyond any statistics to represent. It is easy enough to stand cynically aloof and depreciate the Sunday school to-day. But the modern influences which are making this great work in all the churches more difficult to maintain are at the same time emphasizing the need for it, and increasing both the wisdom and the devotion of that vast army of voluntary workers which in its self-denying labour has no approach to a parallel outside Christendom.

Nor does even ordinary education fail in its witness to modern Christian reality. Much lamentation has been uttered, and unmeasured controversial energy expended, over 'the religious difficulty' encountered in framing national systems for securing the proper education of every British child. The actuality and sometimes acerbity of this difficulty must be confessed. But even this dark cloud has a silver lining. Those who most vigorously repudiate priesthood and oppose ecclesiastical bigotry, as being alike unchristian, must acknowledge that the main trunk of the tree upon which these foreign

branches have been grafted is as worthy as it is now deeply rooted. It is Christ's estimate of human childhood which has kindled all this ecclesiastical zeal. For the misdirection of it, neither He nor His attitude is responsible.

> Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you that their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven.

That word is as clear in its general import as it may be difficult for exact exposition. It is Christ's unmistakable avowal that all children—however, whenever, wherever, born and bred—are the children of God. Beyond doubt it was this same estimate which prompted the Apostle's counsels concerning marriage, to the Corinthians :—

> The unbelieving man is hallowed through his wife ; and the unbelieving wife is hallowed through the (Christian) brother she has married ; for if it were not so your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy.[1]

Such an estimate endows all child life with an unprecedented and unparalleled sacredness, and demands for all children, irrespective of status or clime, the rights and opportunities and helps which will enable them to grow up into noble manhood and womanhood. That demand on their behalf is the surest as well as brightest hope for the future of humanity. The theological blunders which would distort Christ's estimate are passing away before our better understanding of His spirit and

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 14.

teaching, as irresistibly as the old Pagan desecration yielded to the triumph of the early Evangel. Even the horrors of the ghastly War which has been thrust upon us become but the lurid background which throws into more pitiful prominence the fact that all these slaughtered victims are mothers' sons, and, as such, far more precious in the All-Father's sight than the sparrows of which Jesus spoke. The estimates of war given in the cynical words of Bismarck, and Nietzsche, and Bernhardi, meet nowhere with such crushing and final condemnation as in the Christian reality which echoes and acts upon the words of Jesus :—

> It is inevitable that hindrances should come, but woe to him through whom they come ; it were better for him if a great millstone were tied round his neck, and he were flung into the sea, rather than be a stumbling-block to one of these little ones.[1]

Whence we cannot but infer that not only the awful slaughter of men in their prime, but the immeasurable suffering of women and children which has accompanied and must follow war's horrors, is absolutely contrary to the will of God, as Christ represents Him. Such abominations do but exhibit a transient triumph of human perversity and passion over the Christian reality which protests against them as utterly, as pathetically, though often as helplessly, as Jesus Himself did against the evil of Jerusalem.

(7) The influence, however, of Christian reality by no means ends in negative ideals. It is not

[1] Luke xvii. 2.

content with redeeming men, women, and children from the tyrannies or injustices or cruelties which have always sprung up in communities, like noxious weeds, out of human selfishness and pride. In doctrine it has never left human nature like the man in the parable, from whom the evil spirits were exorcised only to return to an inviting emptiness. It has set up and still pleads for the highest standard of character the world has ever known, viz. what Professor Seeley termed 'that higher-toned goodness which we call holiness,' without respect to position, age, or sex. Herein it differs emphatically from the Buddhism with which some are so ready to compare it. If, as is sometimes alleged, the ideal of Buddhism comes at least nearest to Christianity in its moral standard, it is certainly a long way beneath that standard. For in it neither laymen nor women can attain to complete sanctity.[1] Whereas all that Christian holiness involves is open to every man and woman without distinction. Nothing, of course, is easier for the sceptic to criticize, or the man of the world to scorn, than 'holiness.' It may be dismissed with a thoughtless sneer as in Mr. Blatchford's words—'Holiness! for shame—the word is obnoxious.' But there is as little sense as truth in dismissing a great reality on the ground of an 'obnoxious' name. The 'shame' is on any one suggesting such a thing. What would become of the 'Socialism' for which he pleads, on such

[1] As to laymen, see note on p. 222 below. In regard to women, there was no place for them at all in Buddha's original plan. When he was induced to admit them, he predicted that in consequence his law would be forgotten in five hundred years. The female mendicant occupies a much lower position than a monk, and lives really in complete servitude. See *The Noble Eight-fold Path*, Dr. St. Clair-Tisdall, p. 187.

terms? Professor Seeley's well-known words will amply suffice for our definition here—'A character of such elevation that his mere presence has shamed the bad, and made the good better, and has been felt at times like the presence of God Himself.' That, applied to all human relations as the New Testament unquestionably intends 'holiness' to be, gives us as fair a vision as words can convey of the real though indefinable beauty, nobility, and potency, of Christian reality when incarnate in men and women. That this is neither fanaticism nor fiction, myriads of lives happily testify. They are to-day 'the salt of the earth'; and whatever becomes of religious differences, or irreligious cavillings, if only the rest of the world were as they are, not only would the devilry of war be impossible, but the social dream of Mr. Addington Symonds[1] would be realized:—

Man shall love man with heart as pure
And tender as the Christ of old;
Instead of feud 'twixt rich and poor,
Shall each serve all with joy untold.

New arts shall bloom of loftier mould,
And mightier music thrill the skies;
And every life shall be a song,
When all the earth is Paradise.

Than that, as an ideal, holiness needs no other justification. The extent to which such Christian reality is to-day both actual and growing is the human hope of the future.

(8) How far both the Christian Church and the unchristian world are from generally realizing such

[1] Slightly modified in first verse.

high ideal, needs no describing. Human nature is not as 'rotten and loathsome' as some theologies have assumed. But it is still quite as perverse and difficult to deal with as the Bible portrays and history illustrates. Hence, if humanity is ever to

> Move upward, working out the beast,
> And let the ape and tiger die,

there will have to be not merely stimulants echoing G. F. Watts'—'The utmost for the highest'—but restraints aiming to bring about the least for the lowest. In estimating the horrors of the years 1914–1916, nothing worse can be said of the nation that precipitated this curse upon Europe, than that in the conduct of the War it so dishonourably began, Germany has cast off all restraint. Truth, honour, law, convention, treaties, agreements, chivalry, patience, pity, sympathy have all been 'cast as rubbish to the void.' The determination to become the premier nation, which had been fanned into an all-consuming flame by Bismarck, Treitschke, Chamberlain, and the rest around the Kaiser, became sufficient warrant for literally unlimited savagery. The doctrine of no restraint is pre-eminently Nietzschean. 'It is he, above all others, who furnished the philosophical system out of which the action of Germany has grown,' well says an authoritative writer. His own hatred of Germany did not in the least mitigate the mischief of his doctrine. His 'Superman,' on Prussian lines, was bound to become the superbeast. His morality was exactly that which suited the developing brutality of the Prussianized-German nature, from Frederick 'the Great' downwards. 'What is

good?' he asked; and answered—'All that elevates the feeling of power, the will to power, and power itself in man.' This, translated into German by the rabid Count Reventlow, runs truly enough thus—as taken from the Berlin *Deutsche Tageszeitung* :—

> Germans will do much more than persevere. They will fight until *everything* complies with their will—a will that vehemently and *without scruple* puts *all means into its service* by which it desires to arrive at its aim. Any termination of the War except by German victory is unthinkable.

The italics are ours, and hosts of witnesses could be cited to show that this embodiment of immoral savagery is typical. It is only necessary here to say that it betokens a mad nation; and if adopted as 'morality,' would mean a mad world It was fitting that Nietzsche, the most vivid teacher of such doctrine, should die hopelessly insane, under a sister's tender care. As compared with Christ's doctrine his philosophy comes to be a modern case of Julian's '*Vicisti, Galilaee*'—'O Galilean, Thou hast conquered.' For it is certain that humanity will never forget the object-lesson of these dreadful years, as to what the 'will to power,' without restraint, means and must mean.

That Christian reality is utterly opposed to all this horror, both in doctrine and in fact, needs no demonstration. Even those who sneer at it and try to make the Nietzschean brute lovable, know well that Christian ethics, if obeyed, would have saved the world from these blasts of human passion which have turned Europe into a hell. It is no less true

that Christian principle has restrained, and is now restraining, the energies in humanity which in general make for evil, more than any other principle known amongst men. That it sometimes fails, alike in men and nations, every honest mind knows is only because it is for the time being ignored. The extent to which it is acknowledged and obeyed is indeed immeasurable No statistics can exhibit its literally 'saving' power. Christian principle is, indeed, as real as measureless, and it is for want of obeying its calm but mighty and uncompromising 'Thou shalt not,' that men in war become the devils that have ravaged Belgium and indiscriminately slaughtered Armenians, Poles, and Serbians, to say nothing of deliberate and dastardly murders of innocent women and children by Zeppelins. By trampling on it, women are transformed into the furies that yelled their way to Marseilles in the French Revolution. In the days when national war is stilled, similar scorn of Christ's rule brings about no less horrible results from greed, and lust, and drink, and selfishness. A true summary of the whole is that whatever may be the lamentable failures of individual Christians, or churches, from their truest and highest ideals, they and the doctrine for which they stand represent the surest, the most potent, and the most hopeful working influence in civilization, to restrain men from that tendency to 'live dangerously' which would unloose the beast, and let it run amok until it would turn all human life into degradation, and all earth into hell.

(9) A hint has been given above as to the unparalleled extent of the philanthropy which Christian reality has brought about, and still

maintains. The assertion there made may here be repeated and amplified for emphasis' sake. It is not merely true that Christian churches in this country are doing more than any other modern agency to help the distressed, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, cheer the despairing, reclaim the fallen, relieve the suffering, comfort the dying, help women and children in their neediest hours. There is much more to be said. In point of fact there never has been any philanthropy on earth equal, either in quantity or quality, to Christian philanthropy. There is no instance whatever of anything approaching it. The poor, pitiful attempts of some opponents to belaud the ancient Buddhist King Asoka, and compare his work to the influence of Jesus in this respect, only serve to show, when looked into, how hopeless is the case they undertake. Some theologians have confessedly made sad misuse of Christ's impressive summary of His Gospel in Matt. xxv., when they have employed it—as assuredly He never intended—in constructing a doctrine of 'everlasting punishment.' But no such mistake can diminish the significance and influence of the brighter side of that picture. The time has, rather, surely come when the Church may challenge the world to produce either such hallowing and ennobling emphasis on true philanthropy from any other source, or to find in our vaunted civilization—including all that German 'kultur' may stand for—any approach in actual fact to what has resulted from it. There is no parallel on earth to the relief and comfort, help and hope, which have come and are still coming to untold millions of human beings, through the obedience to this part of Christ's teaching which Christian

believers and churches do exemplify. There is enough force in such unchallengeable reality to make all the nations upon earth conspire to cry aloud, above all the din of war or the groans of peace—'Not Nietzsche, but Christ.'

The concrete example which we here specify, is but one out of very many more.[1]

In connexion with Manchester Central Hall, under the direction of the Rev. S. F. Collier, the Mission Centres of Work are reported as follows :—

'The Central Hall, Oldham Street.

The Albert Hall and Aston Institute (Peter Street).

The Victoria Hall, Daniel Street, Ancoats.

The Bridgewater Hall, Queen Street, Hulme.

Irwell Street Chapel and Institutes (Salford).

Young People's Institute, Lever Street.

Wesley Hall, Great Ancoats Street.

George Street Chapel, Hulme.

Ordsall Park Chapel and Salford Dock Mission.

Men's Home, Refuge, and Labour Yard, Hood Street, Ancoats.

Labour Yard, Murray Street, Ancoats.

Women's Home, Refuge, with Workroom, and People's Café, 29 Great Ancoats Street.

Girls' Preventive and Training Home, with Laundry, Hammond House, Reddish.

[1] The extract from the report of this Mission Centre which here follows gives but a bald and imperfect conception of all its activities. And although this is confessedly one of the largest of such 'Missions,' yet in quality, if not in quantity, it is a fair specimen of great numbers of other similar efforts—even in Methodism alone—for the benediction of humanity. When unbelief can show anything approaching such genuine altruism, it will be time to pay heed to the ravings of Nietzsche's anti-Christian egoism, or the blandishments of the 'Rationalist' press.

Maternity Home and Hospital, 42 High Street, C.-on-M., Manchester.

Men's Labour and Advice Bureau. Offices: 3 Central Buildings.

Women's Employment and Advice Bureau, Relief Office, Maternity Charity, Servants' Registry, &c., &c., 8 Central Buildings.

The Social Wing of the Mission, including the Men's Home and Labour Yard, and the Women's Shelter, Maternity Home, and Hammond House, has continued its work during the year with encouraging results. The number of residents in the Men's Home has been considerably reduced in recent months by the calling up of reservists. The type of casual now left, seeking our help, leaves much to be desired. In spite of this, the year's work shows noteworthy cases of transformation.

In a variety of ways, the Honorary Sisterhood renders greatly appreciated service. In addition to providing workers for the ordinary women's and girls' agencies throughout the Mission, a workroom has been opened under its auspices for girls thrown out of their regular employment through the War. Especial care is being taken to discover the diffident and needy cases whose distress is often the most dire, though the appearance of want is avoided until the very last. The Mission worker is able to elicit confidence that would be withheld from a stranger, and thus to supplement to an invaluable degree the monetary assistance which public generosity provides.

The Mission has contributed hundreds of men to the Army and Navy. A list is kept at each branch, of its own representatives, and is read at each

Sunday evening service, and the men are then remembered in prayer. The booklets prepared for the use of Wesleyan soldiers and sailors have been sent to each man, and many letters have been received expressing deep appreciation of the interest taken in them.'

(10) The usual retort of the opponents of Christian faith, when its good works are mentioned, is that these are all very well, but that they are merely palliative, and that what is wanted is a radical cure of the wrongs whence spring most of the sufferings thus mitigated. No one questions that cure is better than transient healing; or that prevention is better than cure. But it is equally true that practical Christian reality meets all three cases. It goes to the root of things more than any other of earth's religions or philosophies. For not only is social injustice very largely a direct cause of much modern misery, but there is a definitely moral cause for all the social wrong. Most wisely has our Bampton Lecturer[1] said that—

> Before all things our counsellors must keep in mind that no permanent reform can be effected by dead lift.

Unfortunately it is to 'dead lift' that most men turn, more or less unconsciously, when they think of the dire problems of our social wrongs with their consequent suffering. There is no need to belittle the good that may be accomplished by wise By-laws and worthy Acts of Parliament. The discussion of these is voluminous, and may well go on. But they are, after all, only details of a larger whole. There are

[1] For 1907, p. 172.

two, and only two, main matters for consideration, viz. the true social ideal, and the hopeful way to its attainment. In regard to both of these, the affirmation may now be deliberately made, that what Christian reality connotes is at once the highest ideal for the future of civilization, and the sufficient dynamic for its realization. As to the former, one who speaks from the very heart of conservatism has well summed up the situation :—

> And indeed for the moment the pedantic individualism which has resulted in the horrors of unrestrained competition and monopoly is discredited. We are more tempted to turn to the rising sun of Socialism, a name of terror or of promise as it may be, but to-day indifferent to no one. And we do well to turn to it and study it long and earnestly, for there is much in it that comes from Christ and makes for His cause. Its ideals are truly and profoundly Christian.[1]

We may here ignore the many questions and conflicting opinions to which such a suggestion gives rise, and in the name of Christian reality to-day only ask these questions. Wherein may it be truly said that the ideals of Socialism are ' profoundly Christian ' ? If so, why are many Christians so bitterly opposed to it ? Why—leaving Germany out of account—are so many Socialists anti-Christian ? And why is there any need or warrant to speak of ' Christian Socialism ' ? The briefest answers to these queries will best serve our present purpose. The Socialistic ideal is ' truly Christian,' because it is that of the family, instead of that of the menagerie. The reasons why so many Christians

[1] Ibid., p. 172.

oppose it are in the main three. They make no effort to understand it, and therefore mislead both themselves and others. What of good they do apprehend in it seems to involve so many difficulties as to be impracticable. It is so often advocated by men who vehemently oppose everything Christian, that it seems to be essentially unchristian. These reasons are sufficiently dealt with elsewhere.

As to why, even in this country, so many Socialists are anti-Christian, it is not easy to put the whole case into few words. The presence of so much unchallenged social wrong ; the apathy of organized churches—until quite recently—towards crying social injustice ; the determined opposition of many Christians to any social efforts in connexion with religion ; and the persistent as well as clever anti-Christian propaganda,—these are all we need mention here. But the need for distinguishing Christian Socialism, as such, is important. It is in very deed not only the present embodiment of Christian reality, but in truth the one hope of the future. This is not the place to labour such an avowal. It is enough to specify the double reason for it, viz. that Christian Socialism accepts and urges both the ideal and the dynamic which come from Christ alone. It not only insists upon the family conception of society, as against the warfare which has developed through unchecked competition ; but it emphasizes and hallows that ideal by the truth of the Divine Fatherhood which connotes human brotherhood. At the same time it faces all the difficulties which inevitably then arise, by means of the measureless impulse which will never be better expressed than in Mr. Lecky's oft-quoted and unanswerable words :—

It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love, has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions, has been not only the highest pattern of virtue but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists.[1]

The present number of avowed Christian Socialists is confessedly small. All such are liable equally to the disdain of ordinary believers, and the scorn of social-reforming unbelievers. But there are ever-increasing numbers in all the churches who, whilst refusing to commit themselves to any economic theory, yet do now unhesitatingly acknowledge that the 'spirituality' which does not find social expression is but an esoteric anachronism; and that the churches which do not aim at saving men and women—body, soul, and spirit—rather than mere 'soul-saving,' are of little or no avail for the coming age.

We had occasion to notice above (p. 54) Mr. Peile's assertion—worth repeating for emphasis' sake—that if only Christian men and women would do the good they know, and put away the evil, they could bring about such a change in the social situation as would make our problems easy to solve.

[1] *History of European Morals*, vol. ii., p. 9, first edition.

We cannot do better here than allow him to finish his statement.

> And the way, the only way, to that change, is the training of Christian character in the individual and the formation of Christian public opinion sure of itself and not afraid to speak.
>
> Christian public opinion, the expression of the Spirit of Christ in the united will, emotion, and intellect of human societies, has wrought and is working miracles. It has raised the standard of purity, of honesty, of lovingkindness; and above all, and including all, it has established the sense of brotherhood, of mutual obligation and responsibility. But it has not had its perfect work.[1]

The caveat in the last sentence here is the worst that can be said against the reality of Christian influence in this regard. But surely to despise or deny it merely on the ground of imperfection, would be as senseless as to contemn a child because he is not a man.

(11) If for a moment we pass from national to international relations and comparisons, it is at least true that Christian reality is working more effectively than ever before, to establish the same family ideal amongst nations as amidst individuals. Just now it seems, indeed, sheer mockery to suggest such a thing; even as it does to speak of 'Christian' Europe. But however sadly true it is that, as yet, there has never been a Christian nation, nor any actual subjection of international relations to Christian principle, yet he must be wilfully blind or recklessly cynical who does not discover the golden thread of Christian protest running through

[1] *Bampton Lectures for* 1907, p. 193.

all the fearful tangle of war's miseries, and promising presently, when order is restored, to weave out a nobler and happier pattern than ever before. It may even now be predicted, without risk of contradiction, that international relations in future will not be based upon Nietzsche's maxim to 'live dangerously,' but upon that of the Apostle—'If it be possible, as much as in you lies, be at peace with all men.' Indeed, the very exposure, in all its ghastly horrors, of the necessary consequences of German national egoism, will serve as unprecedented emphasis upon Christ's contrasted enlargement of the ancient divine command—'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

It is easy to sneer at the unreality of national Christianity, whether associated or not with an 'established' church. But such maledictions always answer themselves. A specious popular writer commences his diatribe against Christianity by thus apostrophizing the 'Christian British people':—

> You are Christian in name, but I discern little of Christ in your ideals, your institutions, or your daily lives. . . . For it is very evident that our common English ideals are anti-Christian, and that our commercial, foreign, and social affairs are being run on anti-Christian lines.[1]

[1] *God and My Neighbour*, p. ix. This flagrant self-contradiction was also pointed out in the fourth edition of my *Clarion Fallacies*; but it is repeated here because so many people yet imagine that this writer's work is forgotten and his influence is *nil*. Amongst the churches it may be so, but it is certainly not so outside their pale. The wave of thorough-going opposition to everything Christian which he started has been and is effectively continued by a ceaseless propagandism on the part of the Rationalist Press Association, the details of which have to be known to be appreciated.

Well, one may certainly reply, 'That is exactly what this writer wants to bring about.' What, then, at the end of the same book, does he specify as the actual result of running our affairs on these 'anti-Christian lines'? After the assertion that in 'a really humane and civilized nation there should be no poverty, ignorance, crime, idleness, war, slavery, hate, envy, pride, greed, gluttony, vice,' he affirms that—

> This is not a humane and civilized nation, and never will be while it accepts Christianity as its religion.[1]

So then, at the outset all is wrong because we are not Christian, and at the finish all is wrong because we are. Comment is unnecessary.

Of the same calibre is the oft-quoted case of a Japanese embassy sent to this country, so the story runs, to see whether it would be worth the while of Japan to adopt Christianity as its national religion. But they saw so many evil things that they concluded it would not be to the advantage of Japan to become Christian. What, then, did they see? According to the above writer, they saw all things 'run on anti-Christian lines.' Was that, then, a valid reason for rejecting Christian principles? In other words, they rejected Christianity because they did not see it—a proceeding hardly worthy of the usual intelligence of our Eastern Allies.

With two truths, then, in full view, we will leave this home-phase of modern Christian reality First, a protest; then, an assurance. Maurice Maeterlinck, speaking quite impartially, avows that—

[1] p. 194.

> Poverty, disease, and mental weakness, are not due to nature, but to human nature, and the relic of mystery when human injustice and wrong are subtracted will nearly lie in the hollow of a philosopher's hand.

That is to say, if only men and women were Christian, there would not only be war no more, but the manifold ills that so disastrously blight human lives during times of peace would find no sphere of action. Secondly, there ought to be unmeasured assurance in the fact that, in spite of all that seems superficially to the contrary, the Christian reality, which is so much more than theological shibboleths or ecclesiastical conventions, is working as a national and international leaven in these our days more effectively than ever before since the Christian era dawned. It may well be centuries yet before the whole of civilization—let alone humanity—is leavened. It is even possible that human nature's perversity may prevent the whole ever being leavened in this mundane sphere of action. Yet, in spite of all hindrances and obscurities, there are plain indications that, to an extent which no man can measure, the kingdoms of this world are on their way to become 'the kingdoms of our God, and of His Christ.'

III

But before final attempt is made to sum up the actual extent and influence of Christian reality in this our day, some definite notice must surely be taken of what is transpiring in other lands than our own. It is, indeed, relief unspeakable to lift one's

eyes just now from the blood-soaked fields of Europe, to other regions where Christian missionaries are bringing to darkened minds and troubled hearts a comfort, a power, and a hope, which constitute a real Gospel. Compared with their message of peace and gladness, the wild words of Nietzsche and the vauntings of German 'kultur' are as the blizzard or the sirocco, instead of what Browning had in mind when he sang :—

> Oh to be in England
> Now that April's there !

It is doubtless as easy for cynical perversity to pick holes in Christian Foreign Missions, as in the work of churches at home. But reality triumphs over all such petty onslaughts, as some noble ocean liner over the dashings of opposing billows. Facts remain, when gibes are forgotten. There are no facts in the world's history which for exhibition of unselfish service, fearless devotion to high ideals, and chivalrous self-sacrifice, equal those associated with the initiation and development of Christian Missions throughout the globe. Nor is there any philanthropic effort on record which can show, in face of incalculable difficulties, such genuine and promising success. It stands to sense that in such a world-wide convulsion as the present frightful War has caused, all Christian missionary agencies must suffer great loss of support from the homeland. But this has not meant, to any appreciable extent, a falling off in devotion, or in best results. Every church has strained itself to the utmost in order to avoid deficiency. Nor is there any risk of exaggeration in saying that the genuine generosity embodied

in the gifts of Christian churches for this service, surpasses any other philanthropic effort in civilization. This is not the occasion for setting these facts in the vivid light of full detail. But a careful summary may well serve both to emphasize those records of missionary labours and triumphs which are embedded in Reports too often forgotten, and to illustrate Christian reality in modern light, on a high level of actual facts which are beyond controversy. For a detailed history of modern Christian Foreign Missions, reference may be made to the latest reliable account in the International Theological Library, by Dr. C. H. Robinson. We must here be content with mere summaries of efforts, results, and prospects. Serious attention to such work really began with the Moravians, of whom Dr. Robinson says that—

> The missionary activities of no other branch of the Christian Church can compare with those of the Moravian Church. Within twenty years of the commencement of their missionary work, the Moravian brethren had started more missions than Anglicans and Protestants had started during the two preceding centuries. Up to the present time the Moravians have sent out nearly 3,000 missionaries, the proportion of missionaries to their communicant members being 1 in 12. Amongst English Christians generally, the proportion is said to be 1 in 2,000.[1]

The oldest Missionary Society now in England is the 'Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts'—known as the S.P.G.—which began

[1] p. 49.

in 1700. But since then, missionary zeal has so developed, that there are vast organizations for this purpose in connexion with every branch of the Christian Church. The following list is not exhaustive; Dr. Robinson's noble volume refers to the facts concerning many other 'Societies,' in an index comprising fifty items for this country alone; with nearly sixty for other lands, all of which deserve to come under the generic title of Christian Missions. In our British midst the main agencies are these, arranged alphabetically:—

Baptist Missionary Society (B.M.S.).
Baptist Zenana Missions.
Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.).
Church Zenana Missionary Society (C.E.Z.M.S.).
Friends' Foreign Missionary Association.
London Missionary Society (Congregationalist) (L.M.S.).
Presbyterian Church of England Missions.
Primitive Methodist Missions (P.M.M.S.).
Salvation Army Missions.
Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (S.P.G.).
United Free Church of Scotland Missions.
United Methodist Missionary Society (U.M.M.S.).
Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (W.M.M.S.).
Young Men's Christian Association Missions.
Zenana Bible and Medical Missions.

The Christian reality which all these connote may be truly said to exemplify at least half a dozen distinct characteristics.

(1) Purity and loftiness of motive. These Societies and their work stand for the purest and

greatest exhibition of altruism the world has ever known. Not one of them has had anything to gain by their devotion, save the help and blessing of others who had, apart from Christian principles, no claim whatever on them.

(2) Enthusiastic and sustained effort. Not only has the interest in such work continued to stimulate thousands of disinterested workers of all kinds, but it has intensified marvellously during most recent years. Those who are so assiduously seeking to spread the notion that Christianity is decadent and dying, may find themselves as utterly mistaken as the Germans did in regard to their estimate of England's vitality and virility. Dr. Robinson recounts that—

> During the period 1900–1914 the number of European and American Missionaries connected with the various Societies increased from 16,218 to 24,871, and the number of local Missionaries and Mission helpers from 62,366 to 129,527.

If that be 'decadence,' all Christian believers may indeed be thankful for it. But every one who is in actual contact with the churches knows that even now, in the midst of the most frightful War the world has ever known, Missionary zeal tends rather to increase than to die out.

As a further proof of this, in addition to all the above, may be mentioned the wonderful development in America of what is known as the Laymen's Missionary Movement. It was started a few years ago by a small group of able and devoted laymen. It now has 101,927 registered members, each paying £1 as a contribution, and holds 70 conventions

As a result of its labours and influence this difference appears. In 1905 the total income of all the Foreign Missionary Societies in U.S.A. and Canada was £1,620,000; in 1915 it has amounted to £3,750,000. There are also some sixty men who at their own expense have made tours round the world in order to investigate Mission work, some of them being now willing to undertake the support of a Missionary or a Mission Station.

(3) Corresponding with the personal effort, is the financial outlay. In the very year, for instance, in which the present War broke out, the total sum voluntarily raised for the purpose of Christian Foreign Missions by Anglican and Protestant Churches was £7,000,000. To this must be added about £1,500,000 raised on the Mission Field itself, either for the support of Christian churches, or the evangelizing of non-Christian peoples. It is interesting to note that between 1901 and 1913—a period during which perhaps more than any preceding, anti-Christian efforts were multiplied and assurances reiterated that Christianity was approaching extinction—the contributions for Foreign Mission work were more than doubled. Also, says the careful chronicler :—

> If we extend our survey of Protestant and Anglican Missions and take in the whole of the century ending in 1910, we shall find that the contributions towards the support of Foreign Missions increased during this period three-hundredfold.[1]

It is true that eight or nine millions seems a small amount, when compared with the one hundred and

[1] Robinson, p. 494.

seventy millions which this country wastes every year on useless and harmful 'drink.' Still less does it seem beside the colossal amounts—five millions *per day* for this realm alone—now being expended upon the curse of war. But the millions voluntarily given for Christian Missions, along with the efforts involved and the characters developed, promise not only immeasurable good for humanity, but the one sole way in which the evils of war and drink will be to any extent repaired, or prevented in the future.

(4) And what of the results of all this devotion and expenditure? Some thirty years ago a little volume was published anonymously by Messrs. Kegan Paul entitled *Are Foreign Missions Doing Any Good?* Its fifty pages supplied an emphatic and unanswerable reply to that query. But much has happened in the interval. This is not the place for detailed statistics, but the sum-total of results in personal influences is indeed worthy of appreciation :—

> If we include the Missionaries of the Roman and Greek Churches, the number of European and American workers in the Mission Field to-day exceeds 50,000 ; whilst the number of communicants or full members of the Christian Church exceeds 7,000,000. Each year, moreover, sees the addition by baptism of more than half a million members, whilst the number of Christian adherents in the non-Christian countries which constitute the Mission Field is not far short of 10,000,000.

No one estimates spiritual work by numbers alone, but Dr. Robinson is well warranted in his comment :—

The foregoing statistics make it clear that whatever criticism may be passed upon the work which is now being done by Christian Missionaries, it can no longer be said that it is being maintained on such a small scale that the student of modern history can afford to pass it by. To the Christian who contemplates his obligations in the spirit of Christ's teaching, the work which is being done will appear pitifully minute ; but if the influence which it is exerting be compared with the other influences which are shaping the destinies of nations, it will be seen to be both large and intense.[1]

Under the special auspices of this Lectureship, it may not be out of place to specify the following details concerning the work of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. Its history will be found elsewhere, and will compare for noble ideals and costly devotion with any philanthropic record on earth. It was founded in 1813, and as the result of the intervening century's labours in our twenty-nine Mission Fields we have :—

WORKERS	
Missionaries	403
Native Ministers..	367
Catechists..	1,159
Day-school Teachers	4,035
Sunday-school Teachers ..	8,915
Local Preachers	6,212
ADHERENTS	
Full Members	142,726
Members on Trial	42,238
Other Adult Baptized Adherents	156,985

[1] Robinson, p. 495.

Total Adult Christian Community	341,949
Junior Members	53,257
Sunday-school Scholars ..	136,310
Day Scholars (Elementary) ..	115,507
Students in High Schools, Colleges, and Training Institutes	10,786

INSTITUTIONS

Churches	1,735
Other Preaching-places	1,934
Sunday Schools	2,218
Elementary Day Schools ..	1,926
High Schools	33
Colleges	9
Training Institutions	14
Hospitals	13
Dispensaries	7

Since the above general summary was written, the latest report of the Society has come to hand, and it appears that in spite of all the turmoil and trouble, the hindrance and depression of the year 1915, the actual results of Foreign Mission work have been better than ever before. The following is the account for the year now past :—

Adults Baptized last Year ..	10,998
Net Increase in Full Membership	4,901
Total Income raised at Home ..	£170,118
Total raised on the Field ..	£223,619

Is there any other realm of human activity that can show such altruistic zeal and philanthropic devotion?

The details of other Societies would, beyond question, be equally interesting and remarkable. The sum-total speaks for itself.

(5) But the quality even more than the quantity of the results of such Missions must come into any true account. It was only to be expected that the foes of Christianity would assail Missionary work with all kinds of attack. Without assuming flawless perfection, either for Missionaries or their methods, there are more than sufficient impartial and reliable testimonies to the immeasurable value of their work. So overwhelming, indeed, is the witness borne to the educational and moral worth of Mission work, apart from the distinctly spiritual results which are most desired, that only wilfully blind prejudice can persist in the sneers and contempt sometimes even yet displayed. The testimony of Mr. Charles Darwin, in his *Journal of Researches*, concerning Tahiti and New Zealand, at the time of his visiting them, has lost none of its force by being since then echoed from many other quarters.

> It appears to me that the morality and religion of the inhabitants of Tahiti are highly creditable. There are many who attack both the missionaries, their system, and the effects produced by it. Such reasoners never compare the present state with that of the island only twenty years ago ; nor even with that of Europe at the present day. They forget, or will not remember, that human sacrifices and the power of an idolatrous priesthood—a system of profligacy unparalleled in any other part of the world—infanticide, a consequence of that system—bloody wars, where the conquerors spared neither women nor children—that all these have been abolished ; and that dishonesty, intemperance, and licentiousness have been greatly reduced by the introduction of Christianity.

Whilst as to New Zealand, at that time, Mr. Darwin says :—

> The lesson of the missionary is the enchanter's wand. . . . The march of improvement consequent on the introduction of Christianity throughout the South Sea probably stands by itself in the records of history.

Concerning Sierra Leone in 1842, a Parliamentary Committee—an impartial witness—acknowledged that—

> To the invaluable exertions of the Church Missionary Society—as also to a considerable extent in all our African settlements to the Wesleyan body—the highest praise is due. By their efforts, nearly one-fifth of the whole population are at school ; and the effects are visible in considerable intellectual, moral, and religious improvement.

During the half-century which has elapsed since these testimonies were given, Missionary work has increased in effort and in result beyond calculation. The marvellous stories of Fiji, Madagascar, India, China, the West Indies, and West Africa, must be left to other occasions. There is no parallel to such disinterested and noble work in human history. In addition to the results which may be called purely spiritual, the other effects are well and truly stated by Dr. Capen, and stand as a challenge to the world of unbelief to do likewise.

Missionaries have done much to remove the evil of ignorance. They have introduced into the East modern medicine, and are treating yearly millions of patients who would otherwise be beyond possibility of relief. Where the need is greatest

they have undertaken to increase the industrial efficiency of the Christian community, and to prepare Christian leaders for the new industry. In various ways they have raised the standard of living amongst the native Christians and those who are under Christian influence. Under the impulse of Christianity, woman has been coming to her own. Education has been provided for her, and in Christian homes the wife is becoming the companion and helpmeet of her husband, and the intelligent guide and teacher of her children. Christianity has emphasized the infinite worth of the individual before God, and the Christian has come to a new sense of self-respect, and he stands before the community as a free man in Christ. The missionary has ever preached and exemplified new standards of justice, honour, truthfulness, and purity; and thus personally, and through those whom he has influenced and trained, he has helped to solve both the political and ethical problems of the people among whom he has lived.[1]

How true is this brief statement, only students of Missions know. Very much more might be said with unimpeachable honesty. Especially do Medical Missions deserve a more extended reference, for there has been, and is at the present time, no philanthropic movement in human history which has wrought more actual relief of suffering, or promises such growing amelioration in the future, amongst untold numbers of most needy human beings.

If all this does not amount to modern Christian reality, what does? Nor is it any the less distinctly

[1] Robinson's *History of Missions*, p. 496.

Christian by reason of our latest knowledge of Comparative Religion. This, indeed, only serves to emphasize the unworthiness of all attempts to put any other of earth's faiths on a level with Christianity in these respects. The only two that can even call for serious mention are Buddhism and Islam. And in these cases all that is required is further study, to show their unmeasured inferiority. Neither of the founders of these faiths can be compared in personal character to the Christ of the Gospels; nor does either religion approach in its effects the comforting, uplifting, hope-inspiring power of the Gospel. Buddhism is radically a doctrine of despair, and Islam but an imperfect theism grafted on to a low-typed humanism. Neither of these, moreover, shows any sign of world-wide adaptation; whilst Christianity flourishes in every continent and clime, and promises, in spite of every hindrance, to spread still more in all directions.

It is difficult, even to impossibility, to summarize fairly and fully, all that the foregoing facts connote. By the side of their magnitude, their vitality, their comprehensiveness, even the dreadful War which has blasted Europe becomes secondary in present influence and in import for the future. The two certainties, which issue so plainly from the great upheaval that only wilful blindness can refuse to see them, are (1) that neither the 'uselessness' nor the 'bankruptcy' of Christianity have been in the least demonstrated; and (2) that so far from 'the whole tottering structure of religious convention' coming down with a crash, as some 'Rationalists' so vehemently desire, such a result is likely only

in the minds of those who wish it. In face of all criticism and all controversy, that which is absolutely true in the foregoing imperfect summary constitutes a modern Christian reality, in the realm of fact, which is undeniable, immeasurable, indestructible, and, indeed, full of promise. There will undoubtedly be many changes in forms of doctrine, and in methods of working. But as related to the soul and substance of the Gospel of Jesus, these changes will be no more destructive than are those which accompany the passage from childhood to manhood. Christianity to-day, in a word—when all imperfections, comparative failures, manifest needs of improvement, are taken into account—is greater, purer, nearer the mind of its Founder, more influential for the real good of humanity, and more promising as a world-wide religion, than it has ever been before in all its history. The condition of the modern mental atmosphere is certainly too really unchristian to permit the churches any indulgence in fanatic optimism. But granted only increasing faithfulness to the main and unmistakable principles of Christian character, on the part of those who bear the name, and there are more grounds at this time than ever before, for believing that to an extent far beyond the expectations of those who so often pray 'Thy kingdom come,' that petition will be answered, to the unmeasured benediction of mankind.

Note to p. 105.—A Jew might not greet a woman; he might not talk with her in the street, even if she were his wife, or daughter, or sister. In the morning prayer of a Synagogue every Jew blesses God—'Who hath not made me a Gentile, or a slave, or a woman.' It was definitely wrong to impart the words of the Law to a woman.

II

CHRISTIAN REALITY—IN THE REALM OF HISTORY

Our vital convictions, the faiths by which we live, are not formed in *vacuo* ; they are generated in us by what has happened, If the past is eliminated from the present, the historical from the eternal, it is hard to say what is left. The historical realities which we have been considering—the Personality, the Self-consciousness, the Resurrection, the growing Ascendency of Jesus—are anything but ' contingent historical truths.'—DR. DENNEY'S *Jesus and the Gospel*, p. 376.

The historical Jesus is not the Jesus whom historical science paints when it eliminates all those observations which do not fit into the frame of a purely human life. Historical science is not able to do full justice to Jesus. Jesus is set for the fall and the rising up again of many in our world too. And no science can prevent us from saying, ' The historical Jesus is the same as the Christ of faith, i.e. the Christ who was a man, but also the beginner of a new mankind, and the Christ in whose face we behold the glory of God, our Saviour and our Lord.'—*What is the Truth about Jesus Christ?*—PROFESSOR LOOFS, of Halle-Wittenberg, p. 240.

We may therefore with all confidence and well-grounded assurance conclude, after making a careful survey of the evidence which we have passed in review, that Jesus is in the most actual and truest sense an historic personality of the period in which He is said to have lived. Amongst all the great historic personalities of the past, and towering far above the greatest of these, stands the solitary figure of the Man from Galilee, who was eventually recognized by His most intimate friends not only as a man approved of God, but also as a manifestation of the Divine in human form. For just as without a Buddha there could have been no Buddhism, without a Moses there could have been no Judaism, and without a Mohammed modern Islam would never have been, so, too, without a personal Jesus Christianity would never have arisen to guide and control the future destinies of mankind.—*Jesus the Christ*, by DR. THORBURN, p. 303.

II

CHRISTIAN REALITY—IN THE REALM OF HISTORY

In nothing so much as in religion has the human mind manifested its utterly incalculable potentialities. Science has revealed its power to gather and marshal facts. Philosophy exhibits its tireless attempts to estimate the facts and educe inferences. Literature displays its boundless fertility in imagination. But in religion even more than in any one of these is seen the energy, the irrepressibleness, the illimitability, the incalculability, the perversity, the nobility, the shallowness, the depth, of human thought. More has been written and spoken and done, alike for better and worse, in the name of religion than in connexion with any other theme. Nor is there any sign of abatement in its fascination. Rather the contrary. There is in these days less probability than ever that men will dismiss religion from their thoughts. The present *débâcle* of civilization in Europe is showing, above and beyond everything else, the impotence of irreligion to make life possible, let alone worth living, either for nations or individuals. Of all religions, Christianity has been, is, and yet will be, by far the most widespread, the most discussed, the most influential, the most revered, the most contemned. It involves thoughts about God, and man, and Christ, and the

Bible, and human life, and a great hereafter, of which we may truly say, echoing John's hyperbole—'If they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written.'

But all discussions in the present, and all vaticinations for the future, are inseparably connected with the past. The history of religion is the longest and oldest of all histories. We are here, however, only concerned with Christian history; but with that inevitably. Christianity without a history is as unthinkable as a vast tree without roots. Probably no study is so strange and perplexing, so disappointing and depressing, yet so inspiring, as Christian history. In some respects the saddest, in others the most cheering of all studies, it becomes all the more necessary for every man who would appreciate the responsibilities of the present, together with the possibilities of the future. To this end we will now consider what Christian reality is written, beyond mistake, on the pages of history.

With no pretence of exhaustive statement, but rather all the incompleteness of a summary, it may be affirmed, in the light of to-day, that four great realities are historically unmistakable in connexion with Christian faith. These are (1) the historicity of Jesus; (2) the continuity of His spirit; (3) the attempted maintenance of His ideals; (4) the sure though slow development of His Kingdom.

To state these again for clearness' sake in other words history bears unequivocal witness to (1) the reality of the personality of Jesus Christ; (2) the perpetuation of His spirit in human character;

(3) the multiform human efforts to weld together such characters into a potent organization known as the Church; (4) the gradual emergence from the Church, and through the Church, of a larger whole known as the Kingdom of Christ, which contemplates nothing less than the moral government of all humanity. Each of these is a theme for volumes. But a careful glance is enough for the assurance of reality, even when full appreciation is not possible.

(1) Let us consider first, for a moment, the historicity of Jesus. Up to quite recent years such a study would have been deemed a waste of time and energy. To ask whether Jesus Christ ever lived, would have seemed as pedantically gratuitous as whether Napoleon, or John Wesley, or Luther, or William the Conqueror, ever took part in human affairs. And in point of fact such an attitude is entirely justified. It has been reserved for the last half-century to call in question what no Jew, nor Greek, nor Roman, ever doubted, and what has ever since their days been assumed, by believers and unbelievers alike, as too sure to need a second thought. After careful and prolonged study, one must be permitted to say—with no wish to be disrespectful—that for a crowning instance of the perversity of the human mind, as above hinted, in regard to religion, no theme can be mentioned which more vividly exhibits it than this before us. Yet, just as in regard to the miserable War which has desolated Europe, it was useless to protest on behalf of righteousness and honour, and vain to nail to the counter, one after another, the egregious lies

with which Germany so persistently sought to cover up her evil doings, so it is equally vain to lift one's hands in amazement at the monstrosity of the fact, when avowedly Christian teachers publish books alongside those of pronounced unbelievers, with the definite intention of showing that Jesus never lived at all. But as Dr. Thorburn has said :—

> Such is at present the last word of anti-Christian mythology upon the great problem of the nature and existence of Jesus Christ. The famous quest which has occupied the minds of so many theologians and thinkers during the past one hundred and fifty years seems once again to have ended, for some at least, in the discovery of the fact that there was after all no historical Jesus to look for. Paradoxical and even absurd as this result may appear to us, it is nevertheless a conclusion with which we have to reckon, since it has been reached by certain perfectly sincere and able, if not altogether impartially-minded, men who are professedly, and no doubt really, anxious to reach the whole truth regarding this important matter.[1]

It certainly comes as a shock, not alone to those who attend mission halls, but to most thoughtful Christians, when an acknowledged Congregational minister publishes a book as

> an essay seeking to show that Jesus Christ was not the Second Divine Person once incarnated, nor a man on earth who became deified, but an aspect of God, His Ideal Love, experienced, personified, and dramatized by the early Church.

[1] *Jesus the Christ: Historical or Mythical?* T. J. Thorburn, D.D., p. 23.

Even a child may be trusted to see that this amounts to affirming that a superstructure acted before it came into existence, by laying its own foundations. But being shocked affords no remedy for the mischief indicated. The situation has to be faced. The unquestioning assurance with which Christian audiences assemble on Sunday may ignore but does not lessen, let alone remove, the questionings in modern minds. Professor Burkitt has said, as representing the modern situation :—

> Every one nowadays is aware that traditional Christian doctrine about Jesus Christ is encompassed with difficulties, and that many of the statements in the Gospels appear incredible in the light of modern views of history and nature.[1]

From hostile sources, of course, wilder affirmations may be expected. The man in the street to-day is informed in *Pamphlets for the Million* that—

> All the positive knowledge we have of the Jesus of the Gospels is contained in broken records of a few months in the last year of His life. Next to nothing is known of any of their authors. The dates of their composition are arrived at, and that only approximately, by delicate adjustments, comparisons, and inferences, themselves among the triumphs of critical craftsmanship. Their place of origin, the influences under which they were written, the motives which led to their compilation, are all matters as to which only more or less lucky guesses can be made.
>
> The popular anniversary preacher, the much-sought-for Mission conductor, speaks of Jesus as

[1] Preface to Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. v.

if He were his next-door neighbour. Whereas the fact is that the meagreness of our actual knowledge, the elusive miracle-tinted and tantalizing character of such data as are available, the silence of contemporary writers and of non-Christian authors, justify the statement that Jesus is the Great Unknown of history.[1]

And it is the Norrisian Professor of Divinity at Cambridge who, in regard to Professor Weinel's saying concerning Jesus—'We know Him right well'—exclaims, 'What a claim!'

The plain truth is that His own question, 'What think ye of the Christ, whose Son is He?' becomes to-day more pressing and pointed than ever before. Only the student of theology knows the extent to which the latest Christology is—chaos. Ordinary public services and private devotion may continue to ignore this, as the man who at Niagara crosses to Goat's Island by the bridge, may safely ignore the rapids. But they are there; and the bridge must hold, if he is to be safe. The labours of the scholar, the discussions of the critic, the conclusions of the philosopher, are all easily enough dismissed, if not also contemned. But all attempts either to stop them or to prevent their influence on the modern mind are as futile as the conceit of Canute's courtiers. The tide of unsparing scrutiny has risen, and is rising. Nothing can stay it. Nothing is too sacred to be surrounded and tested by it. The catastrophe indicated at the close of the 'Sermon on the Mount' will undoubtedly happen in these days to any system of beliefs which is not truly founded

[1] R.P.A. pamphlet by 'Rev.' R. Roberts.

and well built. All the fervent sincerity or pious raptures of believers, and all the applause at fervid 'mass' meetings, will not avail to maintain Christianity amid modern blizzards and tempests, unless it is founded upon a rock that cannot be shaken. So comes it to pass that Christian reality must be historical, if it is to be at all. Non-historical Christianity is unthinkable. It would be not merely an inverted pyramid, but one with the apex resting on nothing. The breadth of present-day Christendom, as above estimated, must have some valid explanation and some genuine origin. Present reality cannot have sprung from past unreality. The question for this moment is—What was that reality, and how are we related to it?

Seeing that this is not the occasion for the detailed discussion of the points involved, it will suffice to state the case in the words of its best known upholders as much as possible, and then confront these with competent replies.[1] This modern vagary of criticism cannot justly be charged upon Strauss, and it is known that the Tübingen school came to naught. But Bauer may be said to have started the movement in this direction. In its present form and force, it is due to a few of later time. All who need here be specified are, Professors Kalthoff, Jensen, and Drews, in

[1] Good popular discussions of this question will be found in Dr. Warschauer's excellent little volume *Jesus or Christ?* (Jas. Clarke); and Mr. H. J. Rossington's *Did Jesus Really Live?* Whilst the student may consult the following:—*Jesus in Modern Criticism*, by Dr. P. Schmiedel; *Jesus*, by Arno Neumann (A. & C. Black); *The Historical Christ*, by F. C. Conybeare (Watts & Co.); *The Historicity of Jesus*, by Shirley J. Case (University of Chicago Press); *Jesus the Christ: Historical or Mythical?* by Dr. T. J. Thorburn (T. & T. Clark).

Germany, Messrs. J. M. Robertson and R. Roberts in this country, and Professor W. B. Smith in America. Of these, any others are mere echoes. But as echoes have a way of spreading, it may be well to take them into account. The general German statement may be taken in the words of Professor Schweitzer :—

> There is nothing more negative than the result of the critical study of the life of Jesus. The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give His work its final consecration, never had any existence. He is a figure endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb.

This is typical of many such assertions, and it must be borne in mind that the avowed aim of these professedly Christian writers is not to destroy but to purify Christianity. So says Dr. Schweitzer further :—

> The truth is, it is not Jesus as historically known, but Jesus as spiritually arisen within men, who is significant for our time, and can help it. Not the historical Jesus, but the spirit which goes forth from Him, and in the spirits of men strives for new influence and rule, is that which overcomes the world.[1]

So says Mr. Sadler :—

> Thus Mark's Gospel is not a history of a man, but a dramatizing of the Pauline Christ-story in

[1] *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 396, 399.

detail, and a setting of it in the days of Pilate and Caiaphas, who are lay figures here.

But the rejection of the Christ-cult by the Jews (an historical fact, as Paul persecuted the Church) is told of as a crucifixion of Christ by the Jews, as was the customary method in religion of those days.

The real Power which heals men spiritually blind, and which dies to rise again, is 'Christ,' the spiritual life of Love in the soul, born in all who die to the rule of the lower self.[1]

On what grounds, then, are such wild conclusions as these advocated? We may say 'wild' advisedly, in spite of all the display of learning in the works of the authors above mentioned.

For instance, Mr. Sadler says:—

> The conclusion to which we are driven is that there was no man Jesus. The word means Saviour, and is taken from Joshua—Greek, Jesus—in the Septuagint Version. Joshua was called the Branch, the Messianic title; and we know a very early, probably pre-Christian, sect existed, called the Jessoei, whose object of worship was a god or lord, 'Jesus,' so called because of the Messiah being descended from Jesse, or because of Joshua.

This is sufficiently thin to amaze any honest student. The thoughtful Christian may well be staggered to find it put forth by any educated man, let alone an avowedly Christian teacher. But it is a fair summary of the position of Professor Drews, following Mr. J. M. Robertson in this country and Professor Smith in America. Joshua in the Old

[1] *Has Jesus Lived on Earth?* p. 43.

Testament, we are told, was not historical, only an Ephraimitic sun-god. A Jewish sect worshipped this half-god, who came to be regarded as the Messiah. Through Isaiah liii. the Messiah came to be thought of as suffering ; then Pagan myths led to the belief that a god was to die and rise again. All that was needed to give rise to Christianity was the transference of these mythical vagaries to a Pauline God-man, Jesus—who never existed. With the exception of Jensen's bizarre ' Gilgamesh ' theory, which is simply learned nonsense, such is all that can in summary be alleged as the reason for calling upon us to forsake the belief in the Christ of the Gospels. And yet we are to gain by so doing, say some of this school. A writer to a religious journal affirms that—

> The getting rid of the utterly confused notion of an historical Jesus of the Gospels is an immense relief, both to clear thinking and religious doctrine. On the historical view we can never trust any single statement in the Gospels, we can never rely upon the truth of any conception we may form of Jesus as an historical or ideal person.

But by turning the Gospels into ' purely spiritual treatises,' we can do as we like with them, and so create any Jesus we please. It is indeed difficult to read with patient charity such deliverances as these :—

> The real Jesus is to be found in the Gospel under meanings which open to the devout mind the inner sanctuary of the soul, and show therein the incarnate God and Saviour who attracts all minds unto Himself.

The only fitting reply to such stuff as this surely is what Festus said to Paul in Acts xxvi. 24. Here, however, we will simply set over against such vapourings the deliberate critical scholarly judgement of an unbeliever who has shown himself in every way competent to deal with such matters. Dr. F. C. Conybeare's *Myth, Magic, and Morals* will sufficiently prevent any notion that he is in accord with Christianity, as generally understood. But, as a critic, his righteous wrath is kindled at the shallowness and falsity of these 'mythical' suggestions, and he has embodied his reply to them in his volume *The Historical Christ.* To no better authority on any grounds could appeal be made. What, then, are his findings? The following are but specimens of much more to the same effect. As to the asserted Joshua sun-god worship :—

> Sensible that their hypothesis conflicts with all we know about the Jews of the three centuries B.C. 200–A.D. 100, these three authors, Messrs. Robertson, Drews, and W. B. Smith, insist on the esoterism and secrecy of the cryptic society which in Jerusalem harboured the cult. This commonest of literary tricks enables them to evade any awkward questions; and whenever they are challenged to produce some evidence of the existence of such a cult, they can answer that being secret and esoteric, it could leave little evidence of itself, and that we must take their *ipse dixit*, and renounce all hope of direct and documentary evidence. They ask of us a greater credulity than any Pope of Rome ever demanded.[1]

I feel that I ought to almost apologize to my

[1] *The Historical Christ*, p. 31.

readers for investigating at such length the hypothesis of a pre-Christian Jesus, son of a mythical Mary, and for exhibiting over so many pages its fantastic, baseless, and absurd character.[1]

As to the suggested comparison with Apollonius :—

'The simple purport,' writes Mr. Robertson in *The Literary Guide* of May 1, 1913, 'of my chapter on Apollonius was to acknowledge his historicity, despite the accretions of myth and more or less palpable fiction to his biography.' And yet there are ten testimonies to the historicity of Jesus where there is one to that of Apollonius. Yet Apollonius was reputed to have been born miraculously, and his birth was accompanied by the portent of a meteor from heaven, as that of Jesus by a star from the east. . . . Why, we must ask, does the presence of such stories in the Gospels irrevocably condemn Jesus to non-historicity, while their presence in the life of Apollonius leaves his historical reality intact and unchallenged?[2]

I do not believe that any really educated man or woman would for a moment entertain any of the equations propounded by Mr. Robertson, and of which I have given a few select examples.[3]

As regards the testimony of the Gospels, Dr. Conybeare adds :—

We have in the historical books of the New Testament at least six monuments. All are independent of one another in style and contents, yet they all have a common interest, viz. the memory of an historical man Jesus. These several traditions and documents converge on a single

[1] p. 42. [2] pp. 45, 47. [3] p. 73.

man, and are all and severally meaningless and their genesis impossible of explanation, unless we assume that He lived. These writers who develop the thesis of the non-historicity of Jesus, because miracles came to be attributed to Him—how could they not be in that age and social medium? —ask us to believe in a miracle which far outweighs any which any religionists ever reported of their founder; they themselves have fallen into the fathomless depths of credulity.[1]

Mr. Robertson thinks that there is a 'Talmudic trace of a Jesus (Ben Pandira) who was put to death on the eve of the Passover, about a century before the time of Pontius Pilate.' Dr. W. B. Smith will not allow even that. But in regard to the 'four wholly independent groups of ancient documents' which testify to the reality of the brothers of Jesus, Dr. Conybeare well says:—

Surely if we were here treating of profane history, no sane student would for a moment hesitate to accept such data, furnished by wholly independent and coincident documents, as historical.[2]

Dealing with the usual attempts of this school to discredit the testimony of Tacitus, because it is not mentioned by a Christian writer until A.D. 170, Dr. Conybeare comments:—

As if there were not five hundred striking episodes narrated by Tacitus, yet never mentioned by any subsequent writer at all. Would Mr, Smith on that account dispute their authenticity? It is only because this episode concerns Christianity,

[1] pp. 123, 124. [2] p. 147.

and gets into the way of his theories, that he finds it necessary to cut it out of the text. You can prove anything if you cook your evidence, and the wanton mutilation of texts which no critical historian has ever called in question is a flagrant form of such cookery. In the hands of these writers facts are made to fit theory, not theory to fit facts.[1]

It is small wonder, therefore, that this cultured critic, who is himself so far removed from what is known as orthodox Christianity, should thus sum up his scrutiny of this modern extravagance which has not only been—naturally—approved by unbelievers,[2] but actually hailed as a precious truth by some professing Christians :—

> I have merely desired to show how difficult it is to prove a negative, and how much simpler it is to admit that Jesus really lived, than to argue that He was a solar or other myth. The latter hypothesis, as expounded in these works, offends every principle of philology, of comparative mythology, and of textual criticism. It bristles with difficulties, and if no better demonstration of it can be offered, it deserves to be summarily dismissed.[3]

[1] p. 160.

[2] Thus Mr. R. Blatchford oracularly declares, in the plausible tissue of fallacies which he calls *God and My Neighbour*—'I cannot believe in the existence of Jesus Christ nor Buddha nor Moses' (p. 9). The worth of such a deliverance may be best estimated from his own words elsewhere. Thus in the very same book (p. 112) he says that 'Buddha lived five hundred years before Christ.' And again (p. 173), 'Yet these men, Socrates and Buddha, died centuries before Christ was born.' Whilst in his brochure on *Altruism, Christ's Gospel of Love* (p. 3) he states that 'Altruism, which is the embodiment of the command "Love thy neighbour as thyself," seems to have originated in the teachings of Christ.' Such self-contradiction yields a fair estimate of the value of his and other 'popular' objections to Christianity.

[3] p. 223.

Undoubtedly such dismissal is the true desert of these latest pseudo-critical perversities. But inasmuch as it is fairly certain that neither the opponents of Christian faith, nor its professed advocates who have taken up this absurdity, will acknowledge their error, it may be well to quote Dr. Warschauer's succinct summary, if for no other reason than to call attention to his little volume *Jesus or Christ?* which, for all ordinary readers, is at once the best and sufficient statement of the whole case.

> Over against these isolated and erratic attacks—made from mutually irreconcilable points of view—there stands the great phalanx of present-day New Testament scholarship, composed not of obscurantists committed in advance to some timid orthodoxy, but rather of students who in these latter days conduct their investigations with the same freedom as the votaries of physical science, and whose conclusions are often anything rather than conservative. Yet upon this point they are all at one—that when all the material has been sifted, all the evidence scrutinized, all the witnesses heard, and perhaps not a little that once passed as unquestioned has been marked as poetry rather than history, one fact remains unmoved and immovable—the point of departure from which our era rightly dates, the *terminus a quo* upon which nineteen centuries look back; that cardinal fact of history is Jesus Christ.[1]

(2) Assuming, then, as well we may, that the historical foundation of Christianity in the person of Jesus Christ remains unshaken and unshakable, let us proceed to estimate, as fairly as briefly, the

[1] p. 56 (Jas. Clarke & Co.).

other features of Christian reality which come within the purview of history. Jesus not only stands before the ages as a person, but as a character. It is but the foolish perversity of 'Liberalism' to say that 'we can never rely upon the truth of any conception we may form of Jesus as an historical or an ideal person.' The effect of the most searching criticism which retains sanity on the Gospel records has been truthfully summed up by Dr. Sanday, than whom no man has more right here to speak.

> The furnace has certainly been heated seven times over, and yet this group of facts, the common matter of the Synoptic Gospels, remains substantially unscathed. Doubts may be raised, but they will never permanently hold their ground. We have, then, I cannot but think, in the criticism of these men, an irreducible minimum. And that minimum, I must needs think, is an Archimedean point; grant us so much, and we shall recover what ought to be recovered, in good time.

When scholars as eminent and as far removed from ordinary Christianity give us such assurances as do Drs. Schmiedel and Conybeare, we may well rest content. Says the former, in regard to his well-known 'nine pillars'[1]:—

> I call them the foundation-pillars of a really scientific life of Jesus. What, then, have I gained in these nine foundation-pillars? You will perhaps say, 'Very little.' I reply, 'I have gained just enough.' In a word, I know, on the one hand, that His person cannot be referred to the region of

[1] For the benefit of those who are not acquainted with Dr. Schmiedel's work, it may be stated that his 'nine pillars' are: Mark iii. 21, 31–35; vi. 5; viii. 12; x. 18; xiii. 32; xv. 34; Matt. xi. 5; xii. 32; xvi. 5–12.

myth ; on the other hand, that He was man in the full sense of the term ; and that without, of course, denying that the divine character was in Him, this could be found only in the shape in which it can be found in any human being. . . . As a matter of fact the foundation-pillars are but the starting-point for our study of the life of Jesus. . . . And this gives us nothing less than pretty well the whole bulk of Jesus' teaching, in so far as its object is to explain in a purely religious and ethical way what God requires of man, and wherein man receives comfort and consolation from God.[1]

Whilst the latter's very frankness makes what he contends for all the more valuable.

It is quite true, as Gibbon observed, that the naïf figure of Jesus as presented in the Synoptic Gospels was soon overlaid with that of the Logos, and all sorts of Christological cobwebs were within a few generations spun around His head, to the effacement both of the Teacher and of what He taught. But in the earliest body of the evangelical tradition, as we can construct it from the first three Gospels, there is little or nothing that is not essentially Jewish and racy of the soil of Judea. The borrowings of Christianity from Pagan neighbours began with the flocking into the new Messianic society of Gentile converts. The earlier borrowings with which Messrs. Robertson and Drews fill their volumes are one and all resemblances heedlessly abstracted from their context, and are as far-fetched and as fanciful as the dreams of the adherents of the Banner of Israel, or as the cypher of the Bacon Shakespearians over which Mr. Robertson is prone to make merry.[2]

[1] *Jesus in Modern Criticism*, pp. 15, 22, 23, 27.
[2] *The Historical Christ*, p. 79

So we are brought back, after all the intervening labours of 'advanced' criticism, to a confirmation of the attitude herein of the two greatest unbelievers of the nineteenth century, viz. Mr. John Stuart Mill in this country, and Dr. D. F. Strauss on the Continent. The latter declared that—

> Amongst the personages to whom mankind is indebted for the perfecting of its moral consciousness, Jesus occupies at any rate the highest place. He introduced into our ideal of goodness some features in which it was deficient before He appeared. By the religious direction which He impressed upon morality, He gave it a higher consecration, and by incarnating goodness in His own person, He imparted to it a living warmth. With reference to all that bears upon the love of God and of our neighbour, upon purity of heart and upon the individual life, nothing can be added to the moral intuition which Jesus Christ has left us.[1]

Whilst Mr. Mill said, in words oft quoted but undiminished in significance :—

> Whatever else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left—a unique figure, not more unlike all His precursors than all His followers, even those who had the direct benefit of His personal teaching. It is of no use to say that Christ, as exhibited in the Gospels, is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been superadded by the tradition of His followers. Who among His disciples, or among their proselytes, was capable of inventing

[1] *Life of Jesus* (People's Edition, 1864), p. 625.

> the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee—still less the early Christian writers. . . . When this pre-eminent genius is combined with the qualities of probably the greatest moral reformer and martyr to the mission who ever existed upon earth, religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching upon this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity; nor even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life.[1]

Here, then, we have a second element in the historical phase of Christian reality. We are warranted, in the light of the fiercest modern criticism which is also fair, not only in accepting Jesus as historical, but in affirming that His character has been as Mr. Lecky—the 'Rationalist' litterateur—estimated it, 'the highest pattern of virtue.' That remains as unsullied as unshaken. But it is far from all.

(3) Mr. Lecky's words have been cited above (p. 125), and we remember his avowal that Christ's character 'has indeed been the well-spring of whatever has been best and purest in the Christian life.' But—'whatever has been best and purest'—does history give us the record of any such Christian reality? Assuredly it does. Not flaunted, indeed, in flaring colours on its front pages, but none the less real for requiring scrutiny in order to its appreciation. Not only was Jesus Himself a new

[1] *Essays on Theism* (Cheap Edition), pp. 106, 107.

type of character for His generation, but He created a new type which has never since ceased both to be and to grow. As Professor Wernle puts it in his *Beginnings of Christianity*:—

> There was in Him something entirely new. . . . His work was to awaken the individual to love, and to make the individual realize his responsibility toward his brother; and thus Jesus did a work which beyond all others was for eternity. And still to-day He calls us back to the reform of ourselves, which is the reform that is chiefly needed.

Paul's great declarations were not merely ideals. They were the representation of facts. 'In Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation'—'faith working within through love.' That is what did actually come to pass through the historical Christ. How wondrously and irrepressibly at the first, has been so often described, that it will be quite enough here to call upon the 'apologies' of Athenagoras and Justin Martyr for a typical statement. Said the former:—

> Among us you will find uneducated persons and artisans and old women, who, if they are unable to prove in words the benefit of our doctrine, yet by their deeds exhibit the benefit arising from their persuasion of its truth. They do not make fine speeches, but exhibit good works; when struck, they do not strike again; when robbed, they do not go to law; they give to those who ask of them, and love their neighbours as themselves.[1]

[1] *Apol.* c. xi.

Whilst Justin puts it even more fully:—

> We who formerly delighted in fornication, now embrace chastity; we who formerly used magical arts, dedicate ourselves to the good and unbegotten God; we who valued above all things the acquisition of wealth and of possessions, now bring what we have into a common stock and communicate to every one in need. We who hated and destroyed one another, and on account of their different manners would not use a common hearth and fire with men of a different tribe, now, since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them, and pray for our enemies, and endeavour to persuade those who hate us unjustly to live conformably to the good precepts of Christ, to the end that they may become partakers with us of the same joyful hope of a reward from God, the ruler of all.[1]

That, in substance, was the character which made Christianity. Well, indeed, may we ask—What then made *it*? To say that the early churches made the Christ of the Gospels, is as absurd as to declare that the rainbow made the sun, or the flowers made the soil in which they flourish.

Nor is it possible for any honest mind to fail to note the one all-prevalent feature of such new characters. They might differ in many details. In one respect they were all, without any exception, one. They were what Paul termed—'in Christ.' No better phrase will ever be coined to express what was, is, and must ever be, the distinctive, invariable, and inalienable mark of all Christianity that deserves the name, viz. direct personal relation to Jesus Christ. Professor Seeley was quite right in

[1] *Apol. Prim.* c. xiv.

saying, after his severe indictment of much modern Christianity :—

> It is impossible in the nature of things that such effects should be produced by pure personal devotion to Christ. . . . Nothing has been subject to such multiform and grotesque perversion as Christianity. Certainly the direct love of Christ as it was felt by His first followers is a rare thing amongst modern Christians. . . . That is wanting for the most part which Christ held to be all in all ; spontaneous warmth, free and generous devotion.[1]

In a sense absolutely without parallel in the religions of the world, the true disciple of Jesus is attached to his Master. Christianity is nothing if it be not a personal relation to a person. But from closest relation to such a Person, the result as natural as transcendent was exemplified in Paul's glowing avowal :—

> Whatever things were gain to me, these I have, for Christ's sake, come to regard as loss ; nay more, in very deed I regard all things as loss for the sake of that knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord which surpasses them all.

And from that day to this, history has confirmed Mr. Lecky's words. Christ's personality has unquestionably inspired numberless 'hearts of men with an impassioned love,' and has acted 'on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions.' The affirmation of the other eminent critic partly quoted above (p. 115) holds good in history's keenest light :—

> Probably no one will deny that in Christian countries this higher-toned goodness which we call holiness has existed. Few will maintain that it has been exceedingly rare. Perhaps the truth is

[1] *Ecce Homo* (Cheap Edition), p. 59.

that there has scarcely been a town in any Christian country since the time of Christ where a century has passed without exhibiting a character of such elevation that his mere presence has shamed the bad, and made the good better, and been felt at times like the presence of God Himself.

Such characters have occurred under many guises, as well as been often unknown beyond their immediate circle. From the early martyrs to the monks; amidst ascetics as well as mystics; in ordinary homes no less than in ecclesiastical halls; when Romish corruptions were assailed by Protestants; in the tragic histories of Albigenses and Huguenots; in the heroic zeal and sufferings of Scottish Covenanters, as truly as in the midst of Puritan rigidity and Methodist zeal; down to the 'blood and fire' of the 'Salvation Army,'—the 'higher-toned goodness' which comes through personal allegiance to Jesus Christ has been as a golden thread running through the dark and often bloodstained tangle of history, bearing witness to Christian reality in every age.

This witness is sometimes all the more noteworthy, by reason of the sickening contrast with its environment. It is small wonder that those who oppose Christian faith should point with the finger of scorn at the miserable perversities and diabolical crimes which were associated with ecclesiastical Christianity during the Middle Ages. Two things, however, will always be clear to every honest mind. These devilries were not associated with Christ, for they are as contrary to His spirit and teaching as night is to day. Also, they were contradicted by thousands of lives and characters which had no more fellowship with them than Jesus, before Pilate,

had with the mob that howled for His blood. In every age true saints have incarnated Christian reality, as they are still doing in our modern midst. Their testimony may be unheeded, as it is often unknown. It does not belong to real saintship to advertise itself. But it is undeniable in fact, and it has been far from wholly ineffectual. It has exemplified what Jesus said concerning the Kingdom of Heaven—hidden like leaven in the midst of the meal, 'until it was all leavened.' The human mass, we know, is tragically far from being all leavened as yet. Nevertheless, Christ's words have been fulfilled through all the ages, 'And ye shall be My witnesses—unto the uttermost part of the earth.' For to take another of His similes :—

> The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard-seed which a man took and sowed in his field. Which indeed is less than all seeds, but when it is grown it is greater than any herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the wild birds come and roost in its branches.[1]

The growth of such a tree shows not only the reality but the vitality of the seed; and these together find expression not alone in the leaves and branches, but in the heart of the stem, which shows by its rings that the vitality has been renewed, year by year, through all its growth. That testimony is as sure as silent. So is the genuine type of Christian character. Its unmistakable idiosyncrasy is that it is Christocentric. Because of the belief, the love, the obedience, which that connotes, the Apostle's portrayal of it in his Psalm of love [2] becomes for all

[1] Matt. xiii. 31, 32. [2] 1 Cor. xiii.

time the hall-mark of Christian reality. Sometimes, alas, we know too well, it has been most grossly contradicted by those who have boasted of the Christian name. But the sham does not disprove the real. There has never been an age since Christ came, without those of His followers in whom His words of solemn and tender assurance find their perennial fulfilment :—

> If a man love Me, he will keep My word ; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him.

Nor has their influence been lost. A living minority must always be more potent for good than a dead majority. The world of humanity has never been the same since Jesus sowed His living seed. He kindled a new life, more wonderful may be but also more effective for the highest, than that ' physical ' life which so defies the probings of science as to its nature and origin. He called it ' eternal life.'

> My sheep hear My voice, and I know them ; and they follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life. . . . I know that the Father's commandment is eternal life.[1]

Whether recognized or ignored, whether honoured or crucified, those who have embodied that life have never ceased. They have constituted the only ' Apostolical succession ' worth thinking of. History has sufficiently shown, but if we only knew all it would show overwhelmingly, that they have been ' the salt of the earth ' and ' the light of the world.'

[1] John x. 27, xii. 50.

(4) Another phase of Christian reality to which history bears witness is the attempted maintenance of Christ's ideals by means of the Christian Church. The fierce light of modern scrutiny has not only beaten upon thrones to 'blacken every blot,' but even more upon churches. It is the very sport of unbelief, in which every anti-Christian tyro can excel, to denounce the Christian Church of the Middle Ages. There is no more sense, let alone wisdom and truth, in such procedure, than in abusing any man of character and eminence—whatever his department—because his youth was wild and foolish or even guilty. Moreover, the honest witness of history as to organized Christianity is certainly not all as black as some would paint it. Black enough the record undoubtedly is. But when a writer like Mr. McCabe sets himself to vilify everything Christian,[1] the least instructed reader will know that there is another side, and common honesty demands that it should be heard. Dean Church, in his lectures on *The Gifts of Civilization*, and Professor Dobschütz on *The Influence of the Bible on Civilization*, will suffice to express that other side for the ordinary reader. It is a pitifully easy task to expatiate upon the depravities of mediaeval ecclesiasticism.[2] But it is utterly useless for its purpose. If, as Mr. Lecky wrote, 'the two centuries

[1] As in his volume entitled *The Bible in Europe*, which is simply a long tirade, in his usual style, from which but one conclusion is possible, viz. that Christianity deserves nothing but the execration of humanity. Such a method answers itself.

[2] How far sneering may be cultivated as a fine art may be seen in such a typical sentence as this—'With what pleasant anticipations the learned cleric approached his task of describing the triumph of Christianity, we can only conjecture, but his first glow of rhetoric quickly dies away,' &c.

after Constantine are uniformly represented by the Fathers as a period of general and scandalous vice,' so that Dean Milman is led to avow that ' evil was too profoundly seated in the habits of the Roman world to submit to the control of religion,' that certainly is not due to the failure of the Church, but points rather to the influences which so far marred what the Church should have been and done. If it be true, as the critic declares, that—

> In point of fact, the distressed historian has soon to record that the main cause of its impotence was the corruption of Christianity itself, especially of the clergy. He finds little but melancholy and disgraceful contests in the Eastern Church and a progressive moral degeneration in Europe,

this is, after all, but to say that to a lamentable extent the Christian Church had failed from its ideal, through the surrounding corruption. But it does not and cannot be made to prove either that there was no Christian reality in the Church, or that the Church counted for nothing as a regenerating influence. Indeed, Lord Morley, who may be taken as an impartial witness, strongly thinks the contrary.

> We get very wearied of the persistent identification of the Church throughout the dark ages with fraud and imposture and sinister self-seeking, when we have once learned, what is undoubtedly the most important principle in the study of those times, that it was the churchmen who kept the flickering light of civilization alive amid the raging storms of uncontrolled passion and violence.

Professor Dobschütz has also affirmed that ' it was the Christian Church which served to keep the old

civilization alive through all troubles and dangers.' But that is not the whole case. Says Mr. George Jackson :—

> The mediaeval Church was corrupt enough, God knows, and it is vain to seek to draw the veil over its frailties; nevertheless, through all these evil times there was a real church life going on, there were real efforts being made to save the souls of men.[1]

Nor, on the broad scale, can there be any honest contradiction of what Dean Church also has asserted.

> It is simply a fact of history that Christianity and the Christian Church have exerted on human society a moral influence which justifies the figures by which it is described—' Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world '—an influence more profound, more extensive, more enduring, and more eventful, than any that the world has seen.[2]

So, too, our Regius Professor of Modern History, an impartial witness, after confessing that ' the Christian Church has not failed altogether, but it has certainly failed grievously,' goes on to make a present-day protest which may well be extended backwards on the lines of history.

> All this may be conceded, without conceding for a moment that the world can do without Christ and His Church. If a high and complete morality often exists outside the Church, it does not often exist independent of it. The atmosphere of

[1] *What is Christianity?* vol. ii., p. 99. [2] *Gifts of Civilization*, p. 82.

Europe has been saturated for some fifteen centuries with Christian principles; and however far the rebellion against the Church may have spread, it may still be called the moral university of the world—not merely the greatest, but the only great school of virtue existing.

The abuses and corruptions of the Church, however gross, are no arguments against the utility of the institution, unless they can be shown to be inseparable from it. Most of them are strictly accidental. . . . If the Church has failed, let us reform it; but we can ill afford to sever the strongest and most sacred tie that binds men to each other.[1]

To this we may add Mr. Lecky's testimony even to some of the mediaeval Popes.

They almost always belonged to a far higher grade of civilization than their opponents. Whatever may have been their faults, they represented the cause of moral restraint, of intelligence, and of humanity, in an age of physical force, ignorance, and barbarity.[2]

So that, on the whole, Mr. Streatfeild is warranted in his protest.

It may not be easy to exaggerate some of the faults of the Church, but it is easy to depreciate its merits. It must not be forgotten that even in the darkest days of ignorance and superstition, in the days of increasing worldliness and self-seeking on the part of ecclesiastical rulers, the Church was still a vast power for good, purifying

[1] *Ecce Homo*, preface to fifth edition.

[2] *History of Rationalism*, vol. ii., p. 142.

> the feudal system with the fire of chivalry, improving the lot of the serf, restraining violence, dignifying labour, encouraging the life of letters (such as they were), relieving poverty, and doing more than any other agency to maintain the Christian ideal of character.[1]

When it is seen and acknowledged that—to quote Mr. Lecky once more—

> amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priestcraft, the persecution, and fanaticism which have defaced the Church, it has preserved in the character and example of its Founder an enduring principle of regeneration,

we understand at once where the one-sided diatribes of cynical criticism fail to express the truth. We have still much to learn from history as to the essence of the Christian reality which, in the Church of the Middle Ages, endured even more deadly opposition than did isolated individuals or communities, for Christ's sake, during the early Roman persecutions.

It would seem as if the most needed modern lesson is still the primitive one, that 'there are diversities of operations, but the same spirit.' The frightful sins against the mind of Christ of which the Church was guilty, in its persecutions for heresy, stand out to-day in their true light, and will recur no more. But bigotry is not all dead yet. Its narrow-minded and shallow-hearted shibboleths still struggle like weeds for sporadic growth in the Christian garden. There is yet much to unlearn, as well as learn, concerning the Christian reality which

[1] *Jesus Christ the Supreme Factor in History*, p. 15

is, or should be, incarnate in organized Christianity. Christ spoke indeed of His ' one flock,' but for three centuries English-speaking people have been misled by the ' Authorized ' Version—which has too often been quoted by those who ought to have known better—to the effect that ' there shall be one fold and one shepherd.' Which Jesus never said. More than one section of the Catholic Church has claimed to be that ' one fold.' The very word ' Catholic,' of which the real significance is perfectly plain, has been seized upon with utterly unchristian bigotry by Rome, in its attempt to monopolize Christian reality.[1] The word of Christ herein is perfectly plain, so long as the New Testament has any value at all for professing Christians :—

> Other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd.

In the one flock there will be, as there have been, many folds. There are now, in direct continuity with the past, not only many folds, but folds in folds. Nor is there the least reason to think—even if it were desirable—that uniformity of conviction will ever weld believers together into uniformity

[1] This mischievous assumption is unfortunately perpetuated by careless preachers who lead thoughtless audiences into religious unreality. But it remains a mystery that other thoughtful preachers —such as Drs. Horton and Orchard—should be content to endorse a usage which is not only entirely unjustified, but concedes to a tyrannic section of the Catholic Church the very claim that would make their own ministry null and void. ' What's in a name ? ' Very much—as the astuteness of Rome demonstrates, in the persistence with which its advocates cling to what they have no Christian right whatever to monopolize.

of creed, or worship, or custom, or service. There is no possibility of entire harmony between the episcopal and non-episcopal sections of Christendom. To some, the sacerdotal element is essential to Christian reality. For others, it is but a poisonous weed that should be uprooted. It must here be plainly pointed out that whilst the New Testament has much to say about 'bishops'—in the sense only of overseers—and deacons, it has nothing whatever to record about 'priests.'[1] For it, a Christian 'priest' is an anachronism, and indeed a contradiction in terms. History has much to say about all three, but the emphasis of its severest censure falls upon the class of which the New Testament knows nothing. There has been, indeed, a kind of sinister evolution in the history of the word. First, presbyter, innocuous; then, priest, as an object of awe; then, priestly, representing rather fear tainted with revolt; finally, priestcraft, to express not merely revolt but bitter reproach. Into the controversy which this theme raises we will not here enter. It is a case, one must own, to which the Apostle's maxim applies, 'Let every man be fully convinced in his own mind.' The conviction embodied in these pages is that in the light of the New Testament it is utterly impossible to maintain the 'historic episcopate' as essential to Christian

[1] The very word for priest—'ἱερεὺς'—is never once applied in the New Testament to any Christian preacher or teacher, or worker, or elder. It is used in three senses only. (1) In reference to the priests under the old covenant; (2) as applied to Christ Himself in the Epistle to the Hebrews; (3) in reference to all true followers of Jesus Christ, as in the Book of Revelation. All other application of the term 'priest' to Christian teachers is an ecclesiastical invention, never contemplated by Christ or His Apostles, but taken over from Judaism or Paganism.

reality. Nor can any priesthood, save that which belongs to every true believer, be justified. The priestly class passed away with the Old Covenant, as definitely as circumcision or the temple service ritual.

But even as it cannot be denied that mediaeval ecclesiasticism had its redeeming features, no more can the good work wrought by Christian men who account and call themselves 'priests' be called in question. There is every whit as much Christian reality in the devotion of a Father Dolling, as in the labours of a General Booth. Still it appears to be beyond impartial contradiction, that the whole modern tendency in religion is rather away from, than towards, the sacerdotal form of Christian reality. Here, as elsewhere, history reveals a process of evolution. From the fervid narrowness of the spiritual conceptions which characterized the earliest Christian communities, taken on partly from Judaic heredity and partly from Pagan environment, the Christian Church passed into the anti-Christian corruptions and perversities of mediaeval sacerdotalism. Thence, in the throes of the Reformation, into the freedom from hierarchy, which soon meant bondage to theology. Now, slowly but surely, the true ideal of a Catholic Church is emerging. The Christian Church, in all its sections, is no longer the training-ground for a special caste of men endowed *ab extra* with powers to save others from perdition hereafter. It is rather a home for the development of a genuine brotherhood, on the basis of the Divine Fatherhood which Jesus taught. It is a refuge from the sin and sorrow of the present, no less than a school for teaching the inspiring hope of a better

life to come. This is what the irrepressible modern cry 'Back to Christ' really connotes. And even if it be not the final, yet it certainly is the best and truest representation of what Jesus really meant when He said, 'On this rock'—i.e. His own Divine Sonship, which is pledge of His assurance of the reality of the Divine Fatherhood for all men—'will I build My church.' His following assurance says nothing about the supremacy of Peter, but simply that 'the organized powers of evil shall not prevail against the organized society which represents My mission to mankind.'[1]

(5) For the final expression of Christian reality we must turn only in part to history, for it is mostly a vision of the future. It is indeed coming, and to some extent is already come, but only as the result of the historic experiences through which Christianity has passed. The Church, after all, is not the final goal of Christianity, but the Kingdom. The Kingdom is the end to which the Church is the means. The Church will always be necessary whilst men are human. But it will none the less be always only a means to an end. The great end is that for which Jesus Himself bids us pray—'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.' History shows how human nature's perversity marred the divine simplicity and tenderness of the Gospel of Jesus, distorting its brotherly ideal—in

[1] Cf. *Internat. Crit. Comm. Matthew*, by W. G. Allen, p. 176. It is specially to be observed that the Romish and ecclesiastical interpretation of Christ's reply to Peter in Matt. xvi. 18 is quite unwarranted. In His play upon the words πέτρος and πέτρα the latter refers to the confession. Mr. Allen's whole note hereupon merits careful study.

direct contradiction to His injunctions[1]—until it became the sacerdotal system which culminated in the monstrosities of the Roman Hierarchy. But no less clearly does modern history put beyond question the decline of ecclesiastical prestige and power. Whether it be ascribed, as Christian belief would say, to a better understanding and heeding of the mind of Christ, or, as unbelief reiterates, to the spread of education—why not to both together?—the fact remains, and is gathering momentum with every succeeding generation, that sacerdotal Christianity has had its day, and sooner or later will cease to be.[2] Organized churches may remain. It rests with themselves. All will depend upon the reality and extent of their contribution to that Kingdom of God which the Apostle so unequivocally declared consists 'not in eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.' Churchianity, in all its forms, has been tried in the balances and found wanting. But whilst that is

[1] Mark x. 42, 45.

[2] It will probably be later rather than sooner, for there is unquestionably a strange hankering after priesthood and its accompaniments, both amongst Christian teachers and the taught—as witness the following which appears as these pages are being written :—'Many of the churches in Glasgow are ceasing to hold evening services owing to the new lighting regulation, but the old order is still in force at ——, and last Sunday night the Rev. —— preached to a splendid congregation, unafraid of the darkened streets. The Episcopalian form of Communion is being introduced at ——, the communicants receiving the elements from the hands of the minister, the third Sunday in each month.' Personally, and with all respect to those who differ, I cannot but regret that in our *Book of Offices*, and in most of our pulpit notices, the phrase 'Administration of the Lord's Supper' still obtains. All that I can find in the New Testament is the tender and solemn observance of the Communion of the Lord's Table. It seems to me quite impossible to separate any 'administration' from priestly function and assumption.

declining, Christian reality is growing. Out of ecclesiasticism, customs, and traditions, a larger, truer, deeper, and diviner Christianity is emerging.

The War, to which some are disposed to attribute such spiritual worth, is not creating the hunger for Christian reality, but revealing it. The lurid flame of battle has consumed our petty artificialities, whether social or religious, and exhibited in light as inspiring as unsparing the residual goodness of human nature. The very horrors and miseries of the trenches have evoked a noble comradeship, far nearer the brotherhood which Jesus emphasized, than is ever found in the easy-going amenities of comfortable congregations which cost nothing and are worth but what they cost. The main lesson of the nominally Christian centuries assuredly is not what some cynics are just now so glibly asserting—'the worthlessness of Christianity'—as though Christianity were responsible for the present horror of blood and tears which is blighting Europe, or for the social wrongs which before the War were the growing blight of civilization. All that these evils conspire to make vivid is the uselessness of the sham. *Per contra*, the world has now to learn the value of the real. Nothing has happened, or can happen, to cast any scorn upon that phase of Christian reality which religious parlance knows as 'spirituality.' It is indefinable, but actual and heavenly. But both past and present combine to insist that the spirituality which finds no potent social expression is a delusion and a snare. If prayer is spiritual, then any answer to the prayer—'Thy will be done on earth,' must mean a change for the better—in Christ's sense—outside the pale of the churches, quite as real and

potent as anything that transpires in the blackguard who is ' converted ' and becomes a saint.

Professor Kirsopp Lake is quite justified in closing his impressive work upon *The Stewardship of Faith* with these weighty words :—

> The one thing which seems certain to-day is that society as we have known it is drawing to an end. Our children will inherit a New Age ; will it be an age of light or darkness ? If it is to be an age of light, there will be required from its spiritual rulers the establishment of some common superior of nations to safeguard the development and legitimate expansion of each against the oppression or envy of any ; and a new extension of Christian ethic to raise the standard of social and national life. Will the churches give this ? Can any one else ? It is the doubt expressed in these questions which brings to the study of history at the present moment so deep a sense of the shadow of evil days to come, and lays upon us the responsibility of warning those who at present enjoy the heritage of Christianity how great is the task before them, and how serious is the necessity for faith in the guidance of life, for the love of truth in study, and for courage in its utterance to the people.[1]

History shows, indeed, that Christian reality has always been present amid all the unreality of the Church's practices, even as the priceless radium is ever to be found in a mass of pitchblende. But what the great troubled human world now needs is something less hidden, more accessible, more ordinary, more impressive. That is to say,

[1] p. 180.

nothing less and nothing else than a Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, in which Christian reality shall be as manifest, as sweet, as efficacious, as the Tree of Life in the vision of Patmos.

> And on this side of the river, and on that, was the Tree of Life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month ; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

III

CHRISTIAN REALITY—IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY

If we were face to face with chaos, as in the opening scene of Mr. Spencer's evolutionary epic, we might perhaps identify his Incomprehensible Power with mere brute energy ; but the First Cause of a Cosmos, to be an adequate cause and deserve the name, must be a Supreme Intelligence.—Dr. James Ward, *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, ii., p. 269.

But now, finally, if the world, though God's world, the expression and revelation of Himself, is yet not God ; if though He is immanent in it, He is also, as its Creator, transcendent to it, surely the greater the world—the greater the freedom and capacity of His creatures—the greater still is He who created and sustains and somehow surely overrules it all.—Ibid., *Realm of Ends*, p. 443.

It is thus in the light of evolution that the mystery of evil becomes clearest. God is the Creator of the world, we say ; His end can only be good—no other is even conceivable. But in a world created for the good there can be no inherent, no ineradicable evil. The process of evolution must then in itself be good, the one way possible to actual good for creatures that are created to achieve it. And if again we ask why the way is so long and the progress so devious and so slow, we can but suppose it is so because only so can the progress be thorough and the way assuredly the best ; this, we may well believe, is why 'the mills of God grind slowly, and they grind exceeding small.' Only after proving all things, can we hold fast to that which is good.—Ibid., *Realm of Ends*, p. 446.

Looked at from the point of view of our present stage of culture, the ethic of Christianity appears to us much more perfect and pure than that of any other religion.—*Confession of Faith of a Man of Science*, Professor Haeckel, p. 63.

The function of conscience is not to point out the rightness of ought, but to insist upon the oughtness of right.—Anon.

III

CHRISTIAN REALITY—IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY

RELIGION in the light of philosophy is concerned with three main themes, God, man, and their relations. In other words, Theism, Determinism, and Ethics. We may say 'Determinism' advisedly, although it is a false name for a false theory. For it includes the whole question as to whether man is a moral being, or a 'conscious automaton.' If the latter were true, the love of God on the believer's part, and morality on the part of humanity, would be alike delusions. If men were what popular irreligion asserts—

> Man being only what God made him, and having only those powers which God gave him, *could not* sin against God, any more than a steam-engine can sin against the engineer who designed and built it,[1]

then not only would the preaching of the Gospel be a mockery, but religion in general would be as absurd as to call upon a row of gramophones to repent. The 'Humanism,' moreover—or Humanitarianism—which 'Determinists' profess to adopt as their gospel, would be equally a delusion. For

[1] *God and My Neighbour*, R. Blatchford, p. 19.

certainly the creature that can no more sin than a steam-engine can no more love than a steam-engine. In which case manhood is gone and only thinghood remains, making ethics unthinkable. But whatever may be the case with other religions, it is certain that Christianity can have neither meaning nor worth, unless it stands for a real relation between a moral being and a personal God. Such terms may merit careful discussion, and the themes involved are confessedly age-long ; but it is neither necessary nor intended here to investigate them afresh, or seek to throw new light upon them. We have only to view what modern light sets before us on these three themes, and estimate their relation to Christian reality. Without God, freedom, and character expressed in conduct, Christianity would be but a mocking mirage.

(1) As to Theism

Christian reality is based not upon Theism, but upon the Theism of Jesus Christ. Theism, however, necessarily precedes Christian Theism. In substance, the dual foundation of Christian reality is best expressed for ever in Christ's own words—' Believe in God—believe also in Me.' These two elements of faith are, for all purposes of Christian thought, inseparable. But it must be owned that if the former could be shown to be untrue, or irrational, the latter would become worthless. The whole claim and mission of Jesus rest entirely upon the reality of the existence and nature of God as ' the Father.' Jesus Himself has put that beyond question. In His discussions with the Jews we read that—

> They did not apprehend that He was speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus went on to say, When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am what I say; for indeed I am doing nothing by Myself, but just as the Father taught Me, so I speak. And He who sent Me is with Me. He has not abandoned Me to Myself, for I am always doing the things that please Him.[1]

The appreciation of this speciality of Theism belongs, however, to the realm of theology, and may be postponed. The first necessary query for a rational Christian faith is whether the Theism which the Bible everywhere assumes, and upon which Jesus built, is still valid in the penetrating light of modern philosophy. The answer of this Lectureship is, of course, a foregone conclusion. But that is irrelevant. Valid conviction may just as truly precede as follow a renewed scrutiny. The main question is whether modern philosophy has discovered any new truth, or truths, which compel every Christian man who is at once intelligent and honest, to relinquish the belief in God on which his trust in the Father of whom Jesus speaks is based.

That there are not a few who loudly assert this, one cannot help knowing. The term 'Atheist' has certainly dropped out of employ, and it can scarcely be laid to the charge of the 'Agnosticism' which has taken its place, that we have only a negative offered us for a positive. For besides Positivism, which has largely lost its vogue, we have to-day a whole brood of '-isms' which disdain a mere negative in disputing the claims of Theism. Monism

[1] John viii. 27–29.

Naturalism, Pluralism, Pantheism, Materialism, Idealism—of which there are definite varieties—Secularism, Occultism—popularized under the name of ' Theosophy '—all confidently offer themselves as candidates for the acceptance of modern thinkers. To say nothing of the Buddhism, Brahmanism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Confucianism, Bahaism, and Taoism, with which Christian missionaries in the East are called upon to reckon.

Even if, however, we confine our thought to the Western world, it must be owned that Theism has enough to do to maintain its own. The reasons, philosophical and practical, which warrant the rejection of the rival systems above mentioned cannot here be given.[1] It will be more to the point to recapitulate the grounds upon which Theism has been wont to rest, and ask what modern philosophy has done either to unsettle or establish them. Herein it will be necessary to run counter to fashion. For it has come to pass in recent years, that most of the formerly held reasons for belief in God have not only been called in question by unbelievers, but set aside—if not given up—by many believers. The rational grounds or ' arguments ' for the belief in a personal God, such as Theism connotes, have been stated in various ways. Stated most succinctly, it should suffice to say that an intelligible order around us, and moral instinct within us, can only be rationally explained by some Cause adequate to their production. As the lower can never account for the higher, there must be some Source of all

[1] A brief but careful summary of them will be found in the ' Why Not ? ' series published by the present writer (C. H. Kelly), and assembled in one volume under the title *Why Not Modern Unbelief ?*

greater than ourselves, which we term 'infinite' because we can set no measure to its power, and which we deem 'personal' because only from such a Source can we conceive of our own personalities as being derived. Neither modern science nor philosophy can unsettle such a conviction. For philosophy is to us unthinkable, except as the expression of personality. An impersonal philosopher is a contradiction in terms. So that if any philosophy is led to postulate an impersonal source of all, it is therein contradicting itself and so proving its own invalidity. Thought can never, so long as men are sane, be derived from the unthinking.

But the more elaborate statement of the reasons for Theism would include all these:—(1) The aitiological plea, which deals with causation, and assumes the principle that for every event there must be an adequate cause. If this is not conceded, reasoning is at an end. (2) The cosmological plea, which points to the prevalence of law and order throughout our whole environment, as contrasted with chaos. (3) The teleological plea—the old 'design argument'—relating to the evidences of design and purpose which nature so overwhelmingly exhibits. (4) The ethical argument, which relates to the moral potentialities of human nature, together with the actuality and potency of conscience.

These all, thus far, might be summed up in Kant's well-known avowal that he was most of all impressed 'by the starry heavens above, and the moral law within.' But at least half a dozen other reasons for belief in God have been set forth, and that by men who could not with any degree of truth

be considered deficient in either intelligence or honesty. Arguments from Ontology, Idealism, Transcendentalism, Intuition, Psychology, Universality, have been carefully constructed. Even if some of these do not commend themselves to ordinary intelligence, it by no means follows that they are wisely or fairly dismissed with a sneer. They have been fully considered elsewhere.[1] It will suffice here to think seriously only of the first four. That, certainly, we need not hesitate to do. For it may be said calmly, but with the utmost confidence, that, however much they may require restatement in our modern light, the rational principles which they exemplify are as true as ever, and have much more to gain than to lose from the latest and keenest scrutiny.[2]

In careful summary, therefore, it may be openly declared to the modern world that whether the great Source of all be called 'God' or 'Nature,' however much or little we may discern in regard to it, an ultimate and adequate cause there must be for the existence, motion, position, potency, of everything known to us—including ourselves—in

[1] Special reference may be made to the following works :—*Theism*, by Dr. B. P. Bowne (American Book Co.) ; *Theism*, by Dr. R. Flint (Blackwood) ; *Theism, in the Light of Present-day Science and Philosophy*, by Dr. Iverach (Hodder) ; *Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism*, by W. L. Walker (T. & T. Clark) ; *Aspects of Theism*, by Dr. W. Knight (Macmillan) ; *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, by Professor J. Ward (Black) ; *The Realm of Ends—Pluralism and Theism*, by Professor Ward (Cambridge University Press). Also *The Immanence of God* and *Personalism* (Constable), by Dr. Borden P. Bowne.

[2] In addition to the works just mentioned, detailed reasons for this assertion will be found in the present writer's three volumes, *Haeckel's Monism False, Theomonism True, The True God*, published by C. H. Kelly.

the universe. To insist upon such an axiom is not to plead for Theism ; it is an absolute necessity of human thought. To contradict it, is to abandon reason. How utterly this is the case, may be illustrated from the latest and final finding of the most versatile and vigorous anti-Christian writer in our midst. This champion of Haeckel's Monism, after demolishing—as he asserts—all the defences of Theism, comes triumphantly to the following conclusion as the absolute settlement of everything :—

> Haeckel and his colleagues hold that the direction which the evolutionary agencies take is not fortuitous, that they never could take but the one direction which they have actually taken. . . . The Monist says that these forces no more needed guiding than a tram-car does ; there was only one direction possible for them. Here is a clear issue.

In very deed there is. For even if we throw in, as a small make-weight, the construction of the tram-car itself—without, of course, any guidance, i.e. any intelligent purpose on the part of any builder—when such a car is found discharging its functions in our streets without any guidance, either from metals beneath or driver's hand above, it will be time to think of this latest antitheistic inanity.

Again, as regards the appreciation of our whole physical environment. The desperate shifts of ' Rationalism ' are exhibited in the avowal that ' there is as much order in a state of chaos, as at any other period of cosmic history.' This identification of order with disorder will commend itself to many schoolboys, but will hardly bring them prizes other than the fool's cap. The ' Rationalism ' which sees

no difference between a heap of type fallen upon the floor, and the same sorted for use in the pages of a book, merits no further notice. It is only suited for the inmates of some asylum. Science, we know, has much to say about 'laws of nature.' If that phrase means anything more than that we see things happen in a certain way to-day, but that they may happen in an entirely different way to-morrow—which would put an end to science—then that something more is what Theism rationally recognizes, and Atheism irrationally ignores. So long as intelligence is linked with honesty, no denial is possible that we live in the midst of laws which cannot be broken; of order which cannot be mistaken; of beauty which biology does not account for; of arrangement which even the mind of a child appreciates. To ascribe all this to chance, or to 'necessity'—which is only dynamized chance—is as irrational as irreligious.

But it is especially the 'teleological' argument which has drawn forth the denials, and often also the scorn, of unbelief. The people are being told by popular writers that—

> Darwinism killed the Design argument by explaining adaptation as a result, without assuming design as a cause. The argument, indeed, like all proofs of God's existence, was based upon ignorance.

Such utterances are really comforting to the troubled believer. For he cannot but see that it must be a very bad cause that needs propping up by such impudent falsities as that. Any honest student who will study the edition of *Paley's*

Natural Theology edited by Professor Le Gros Clark, F.R.S., President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, will appreciate his summary.

If the theory of evolution shall ever take its place among the universally recognized truths of science, it will undoubtedly affect what may be called the incidence of the argument, and render the application of it more remote. But a little consideration will show that the argument itself will retain its validity and by no means be robbed of its force, or become antiquated or useless.

As to what the 'more remote' application really signifies, it could scarcely be better put than by so eminent an unbeliever as Professor Huxley.

The teleological and mechanical views of nature are not necessarily exclusive. On the contrary, the more purely a mechanist the spectator is, the more firmly does he assume a primordial molecular arrangement of which all the phenomena of the universe are consequences; and the more completely is he thereby at the mercy of the teleologist, who can always defy him to disprove that this arrangement was intended to evolve the phenomena of the universe.

The words in which Darwin himself corroborated Huxley's judgement are well known, but it will do no harm to rehearse them once more.

There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one, and that whilst this planet has gone on cycling according

to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been and are being evolved.[1]

It has been noted, in the interests of Agnosticism, that elsewhere Darwin also referred to

an architect who should rear a noble and commodious edifice without the use of cut stone, by selecting stones of various shapes from the fragments at the base of a precipice.

But what must be the condition of any mind which regards that statement as a witness against purpose in nature? Even if the bizarre notion of such an edifice were allowed to pass, is the erection of such 'a noble and commodious edifice' even thinkable to a child, without plan or purpose? And when any writer speaks of 'an architect selecting stones' in order to build, as a type of unintelligent and purposeless mechanism, one can only be thankful that Theism, at all events, has no need of such wilful blindness. In a word, the 'design argument,' fairly stated in modern terms, is not only still valid, but has so gained, not lost, in significance by the readjustment, that there is no fear of its being ever set aside again.

Furthermore, even if we waive the old plea '*e consensu gentium*'—though the attempts to find a race without any religious instincts have been pitifully unsuccessful, and at most have only discovered a few doubtful specimens amongst lowest tribes—there remains that which so impressed the

[1] *Origin of Species*, p. 429.

greatest German philosopher. Kant's reverence for the moral nature of man is justified to the uttermost. No better confirmation, indeed, of the 'ethical argument' for the being of God could be desired, than its denials by 'Rationalism.' For when it is declared that certain proofs are invalid, what is assumed? That truth is more to be valued than error? But why should it be? Because of moral principle? But if so, that betokens a moral capacity, which demands adequate cause quite as much as the solar system. The emergent problem for unbelief is to deduce a moral nature, i.e. one which distinguishes right from wrong, and insists that right ought to be followed 'in scorn of consequence,' from unintelligent 'necessity' working upon mindless matter—or, if Professor Haeckel's followers prefer it, upon 'substance.' Compared with such a performance, all the miracles of the Bible are but trifles.

Even if the strenuous efforts of modern anti-Christian philosophy, to deduce a real and complete morality from the inter-working of human social instincts, were ever so satisfactory—to some minds—it would only create afresh in the moral realm the problem which Huxley stated so forcibly for the physical. It is a case of potentiality. Suppose that we go yet farther back, behind or before the human instincts which emerged 'naturally,' it is said, from the higher animal. What then? Well, at least this, that the contents of that 'naturalness' demand an adequate cause, quite as much as the marvellous complications in the structure of a modern battleship. Nor is there the least escape from this necessity in continuing the regress from monad to atom, from

atom to electron, from electron to negative electricity, from electricity to the final ether. For in that 'primordial nebulosity' we—philosophers, poets, politicians, saints, sinners, alike—either were, or were not. If we were not there, then we have come from nothing, and from nowhere, without any creating power—which is a sufficient miracle, even for unbelief. But if we were there, then two queries demand answer. How did we get there? And how have we, from such beginning, come to be what we are? The magic word 'evolution' does not help us much, seeing that at best and utmost it is itself but a process, an order of procedure, which again demands to be rationally accounted for. Indeed, evolution, to be thinkable, must presuppose 'involution'; and involution again requires an adequate cause.

With the present-day tendency of philosophy towards Monism, Theism has no essential conflict. There is a spiritual monism which is much more philosophic and scientific than Professor Haeckel's speciality. This latter, indeed, ought, as Sir Oliver Lodge has pointed out, to be labelled or branded as 'materialistic monism.' The discussion of Monism is precluded here[1]; but there is at least enough reason in it—as Professor J. Ward has shown in his latest valuable Gifford Lectures for 1907–10—to save any thoughtful mind from drifting to Pluralism—with all due respect to the late Professor William James. On the other hand, the discovery, now proceeding, of the abysmal depths of human personality, creates a sufficient warranty against the

[1] For fair and full discussion see *Theomonism True*, by present writer.

blandishments of Pantheism. The human self can no more be annihilated by merging in a divine ALL, than the divine personality can be excluded from thought by assuming a mechanical universe.

The doctrine of divine immanence has necessarily become a prominent factor in recent religious thought. Its significance and relations have been well and sufficiently discussed in the preceding Fernley Lecture.[1] It represents quite worthily not only the final obsequies of Deism, but the readiness as well as capacity of Theism to adapt itself to that which is demonstrably true, whether it be a genuinely new discovery, or a better understanding of that which is old. The Bible makes no pretension anywhere to anticipate modern science or philosophy. But it has no more to do with Deism than with Pantheism. The truth of the divine immanence is as really implied—without any attempt at academic formulation—in the one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm, or in Paul's quotation on Mars Hill, as in our present-day recognition of directivity in the phenomena of karyokinesis. Whilst the sublime actuality of the divine transcendence flashes out from the very first words in Genesis, and is never lost sight of to the last sentence of the Revelation. On purely philosophical lines Professor Ward has succinctly stated the whole case in saying that—

> For Pantheism, God is the immanent ground of the world; for Deism, He is the transcendent ground; for Theism, He is both.[2]

[1] *Immanence and Christian Thought*, by Professor Platt, M.A., D D (C. H. Kelly).

[2] *The Realm of Ends*, p. 234.

It is true that we now survey nature on an immensely vaster, as well as more exact scale, than Psalmist, or Prophet, or Apostle, could do. But the practical and spiritual issues are the same ; save that they are more impressive. In his instructive volume on *The Spiritual Interpretation of Nature*, Dr. J. Y. Simpson's chapter on 'The Directive Factor in Evolution' truly points out that—

> When we look back and see the stages by which the earth was better fitted to serve as the environment of life ; when we become aware of the various phases in the evolution of life as characterized by higher and higher individuation, with continual increase of significance and apparent movement towards an end ; when we ask ourselves why the surviving species, being the only ones that could survive under the very definite conditions of their survival, are on the whole higher species, we find it difficult to get away from the idea of a scheme of progress which in its continuity is purpose. . . . Further, this purpose—if it be such—can exist only in or for a mind, the Divine Mind, immanent and operative in nature, feeling and working its way, as it were, to perfect self-expression and self-realization.[1]

The difficulties in the way of faith which are associated with dysteleology, i.e. the apparently useless or harmful occurrence of rudimentary or atrophied organs in animals or plants, belong rather to Christian Theism, and will be considered presently. Here it will suffice rather to affirm that, when all is fairly taken into account in the light

[1] p. 272.

of to-day, the late Professor Borden Bowne was warranted in his estimate as to the future of Theism.

> Upon the whole the theistic outlook is most encouraging. Conflicts of science and religion which were at one time a standing order of the day have almost entirely vanished. The air has cleared. Fundamental problems are seen to remain about what they always were. A better epistemology has shown the suicidal nature of atheistic thought. A better metaphysics is curing the naturalistic obsession. A proper division of labour has secured to science and philosophy their appropriate fields and inalienable rights, while Theism more and more appears the supreme condition of both thought and life.

That the melancholy conclusions of Professor McTaggart[1] are by no means inevitable, has been plainly shown not only by Professor Bowne in his—one might be forgiven for saying—unanswerable thesis, but by such more recent deliverances as the Gifford and Donnellan Lectures. In the former Lectures for 1907–1910 Professor James Ward puts the case as much more hopefully as more truly.

> If God is the ground of the world at all, He is its ground always as an active, living, interested Spirit, not as a merely everlasting, changeless, and indifferent centre, round which it simply whirls.

[1] In his *Some Dogmas of Religion*, a volume simply swarming with fallacies. The conclusion is that there is no reason for a positive belief in immortality—no reason why human volitions should be exceptions to any law of the complete determination of events—no reason to suppose that God exists. He may well add—' We are here confronted with one of the great tragedies of life. It is sad, but I do not know why it should be thought strange.'

> Still God's action in the world must be for us as inscrutable as His creation of it; indeed, there is no reason why we should attempt to discriminate between them. In calling God transcendent, we seek only to express that duality of subject and object which we take as fundamental to all spiritual being, not to suggest that His relation to the world must be thought under the category of external causation like the interaction of object with object.[1]

From different standpoints and in diverse manners also Mr. Balfour and Dr. D'Arcy[2] lead us philosophically to the same valid conclusion, viz. that all things begin, continue, and end, in God. Mr. Balfour's closing words, like those of Professor Ward, are as much truer as they are more cheerful than those of Professor McTaggart. Says the former :—

> We must hold that reason and the works of reason have their source in God, that from Him they draw their inspiration; and that if they repudiate their origin, by this very act they proclaim their own insufficiency.

Whilst Professor Ward's noble contribution thus concludes :—

> The world is God's self-limitation—self-renunciation, might we venture to say? And so God is love. And what must that world be that is worthy of

[1] *The Realm of Ends*, p. 447.

[2] *Theism and Humanism*, Gifford Lectures, 1914 (Hodder & Stoughton), by Mr. A. J. Balfour; *God and Freedom in Human Experience*, by Dr. C. F. D'Arcy, Donnellan Lectures, 1913–1914 (E. Arnold).

such love? The only worthy object of love is just love. It must, then, be a world that can love God. But love is free; in a ready-made world, then, it could have no place. Only as we learn to know God do we learn to love Him; hence the long and painful discipline of evolution, with its dying to live—the converse process to incarnation—the putting off the earthly for the likeness of God. In such a realm of ends we trust 'that God is love indeed, and love creation's final law.' We cannot live or move without faith, that is clear. Is it not, then, rational to believe in the best? we ask And can there be a better?[1]

(2) As to 'Determinism'

But modern philosophy concerns itself necessarily quite as much with man as with God. It is soon found that the problems associated with the human are ultimately as insoluble as those relating to the divine. Here we may entirely agree with Professor McTaggart.

> Is knowledge so easy to get that the highest and deepest of all knowledge is likely to be had for the asking? Or is everything good so common that we should expect that religion—almost the best of all earthly things—should be never absent where it is desired?[2]

It is little to be wondered at that the philosophy which can ransack both the makrokosm of nature and the mikrokosm of human nature, without finding any room or need for God, should also fail to discover

[1] p. 453. [2] *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 298.

man. For it is so plain that 'the man in the street' cannot—and does not—help seeing it, that if what the falsely named 'Determinism' seeks to establish were true, man as we know him would disappear, and only a conscious bipedal automaton would be left, to which, indeed, consciousness itself would only be an 'epiphenomenon.'[1] Says Mr. Elliott, controverting M. Bergson—with the entire concurrence of Sir E. Ray Lankester, who blesses his effort :—

> Man may be defined as a machine for converting chemical energy into motion.

This is on a par with James Mill's definition of a dog's life as 'a succession of smells'; and is as true as to declare that love is nothing but a series of molecular vibrations. Lest, however, there should be any doubt about the matter, we are further informed that modern science demonstrates the following :—

> Man is like a toy or puppet in which the arms, legs, and movable parts are drawn upwards and downwards by wires. . . . All the actions of men are explicable as purely material and mechanical sequences, without invoking the assistance of mind, or consciousness, or anything but matter and energy working under their ordinary laws. Consciousness appears only as an inert accompaniment of material cerebral changes.[2]

When it is borne in mind that this attitude is not only endorsed by teachers of science and philosophy

[1] For this deliberate estimate, and full discussion of reasons for it, see the present writer's *Determinism—False and True* (C. H. Kelly).

[2] *Science and Professor Bergson*, pp. 179, 182, 184.

in high positions, but spread abroad throughout the country by popular journals and cheap booklets which reach and affect myriads of ordinary readers, the fallacy of the common notion in Christian churches that 'Materialism is dead' and 'Determinism' ineffective, becomes apparent. Haeckel's dogmatic avowal that—

> The great struggle between the determinist and the indeterminist, between the opponent and the sustainer of the freedom of the will, has ended to-day, after more than two thousand years, completely in favour of the determinist. We now know that each act of the will is as fatally determined by the organization of the individual, and as dependent on the momentary condition of his environment, as every other psychic activity,[1]

is indeed as false as it is impudent. But there are not wanting strong supporters of his doctrine, to an extent greatly underestimated by religious teachers. It stands to sense that declarations of philosophers such as Hobbs, Hume, Spinoza, Edwards, Bain, Mill, L. Stephen, H. Sidgwick, Shadworth Hodgson, Rashdall, McTaggart, Bertrand Russell, and others, when brought home to the average man by such popular summaries as Hamon's *The Illusion of Free Will*, Mark Twain's *What is Man?—a Machine and Nothing More*, Cotter Morison's *Service of Man*, and Blatchford's *Not Guilty*, must have made wide and deep impression. This they certainly have done. It is true that through the influence of other modern writers—more especially Eucken and Bergson, reinforcing Kant and Lotze herein, on the

[1] *Riddle of the Universe* (Cheap Edition), p. 47.

Continent; Professor W. James in America; and in this country Momerie, W. J. Ward, Romanes, Professor J. Ward, Sir Oliver Lodge, H. H. Williams, Boyce Gibson, and others—the tide seems definitely to have turned in the opposite direction to that asserted by Haeckel. But this yields no warrant whatever for the superficial assumption that the all-important question involved is now finally settled on the Christian side. It is very far from being settled. It cannot, of course, be discussed here. Reference to the writers just named is amply sufficient. But it may be well to take, from one of the latest and most careful summaries, a fair statement of that philosophic basis of Christian reality herein, concerning which we may say that it stands firm in spite of all assault.

> What is meant by Free Will is that, in all cases of voluntary action, the determination is by some kind of influence which is external to and does not form a part of the processes of empirical law; and that this influence operates not directly on our actions, but on our decision between conflicting motives, in such a manner that our actions, though the motives may be the proximate empirical causes, are ultimately determined by a form of causation which is not empirical. Finally, it is believed that this influence which is external to the universe of phenomena is individual and personal, and we identify it with ourselves, regarding it, indeed, as our only real and personal self.[1]

It may truly be said that, for Christian reality today, the hackneyed problem of 'Free Will' has

[1] *Religion and Free Will*, Benett, p. 282.

given place to deeper appreciation of the mystery of human personality. For ordinary religious people, both ancient and modern, this is no mystery at all. A man or woman is a person—I know that I am I, and that I am a person, not a thing—and that is sufficient. Self-consciousness is unquestionable, and it brings with it all that is necessary to constitute man a moral being. Which is all the philosophy that working religion requires, or even tolerates. But the modern mind does not and cannot be made to stop there. When the personality of God is called in question, human personality inevitably comes also into the inquiry. As Dr. Jevons has said in his instructive volume on *Personality* :—

> The same doubts that are raised about our own personality and existence can be raised about the personality and existence of God. If personality is an unmeaning term designating nothing, then there are no persons human or divine.[1]

Tennyson's summary also is as suggestive and true as ever :—

> The baby, new to earth and sky,
> What time his tender palm hath pressed
> The tender circlet of the breast,
> Has never thought that 'this is I.'
>
> But as he grows he gathers much,
> And learns the use of 'I' and 'me,'
> And finds, 'I am not what I see,
> And other than the things I touch.'

Yes, but what 'other'? That is the question in which, even more than as to 'free will,' the Miltonian

[1] Preface, p. vi.

picture recurs of saints or angels 'in wandering mazes lost.' Modern thinkers are losing themselves in trying to find themselves. Even as Hume did when he declared—'I never can catch myself at any time without a perception.' It does not seem to have occurred to him to consider how an 'I' that was no 'I' could ever catch anything, at any time, in any way whatever. So, too, when Professor James decided that 'a man's self is the sum-total of all that he can call his.' We cannot but ask, What, then, is this 'he' which is so distinct from 'the sum-total' as to be able to estimate it? If indeed 'he' can call anything 'his'—the one certainty is that that 'his' is not 'he.'

The truth is, that however keen and subtle the suggestions which emanate from some of the thinkers named above—both 'determinist' and non-determinist—with a view to getting rid of human personality because of its mystery, no one of them has succeeded. For the simple but sufficient reason that no man ever can so succeed, since in every conceivable case there is involved an inevitable self-contradiction. No man can possibly deny personality without affirming it in his denial. In his thoughtful analysis of Bergson's position, Dr. Jevons has well said that—

> When M. Bergson asserts that there is movement, but that there is nothing which moves, he is making an unmeaning and impossible assertion, which may lead to the denial of the existence of personal identity.[1]

[1] *Personality*, p. 147.

In point of fact it does so lead M. Bergson himself For as Dr. Jevons adds on another page :—

> Consequently and consistently M. Bergson, though he postulates consciousness and free will, does not combine them, or admit that they can be combined in a unity—still less in a personality.[1]

Such an attitude should at least give pause to some Christian teachers who are in unwarranted haste to believe—and proclaim—that the modern influence of Eucken and Bergson is going to rehabilitate Christian reality. Before any heed is paid to such suggestions, it would be well for such writers or speakers to study the works of these philosophers The 'spiritual reality' which can dispense with personality is likely to be of as little service to modern Christianity, as was the admission of the wooden horse and its contents to the defenders of ancient Troy.

In spite of all the sophistries of Determinedism—the proper name for the theory—common sense, which is not only, as Butler avowed, 'the candle of the Lord within us,' but the practical Ithuriel spear of mankind around us, agrees that without the power of choice there can be no moral being, and therefore no religion. Nothing can be to-day of greater import for all to whom Christian reality is of any value, than that they should both know what this power of choice involves, and be certified that it is not taken from us by modern philosophy.

In his thoughtful volume above mentioned, Mr. Benett says that 'whenever we use the word

[1] p. 117.

" choice " we imply the causality of a non-empirical self.' That is a great affirmation, and will by some be stoutly contested. What, then, is this self? and how may men be so sure of it as to feel warranted in disregarding those who deny it? Here we must be content, through unwelcome limitation, to refer to the able summary of the late Professor Bowne in his pages on *Personalism*. Those who have thought most carefully upon the matter will be most ready to acknowledge the mystery of motives. For even if we agree, with Sir Oliver Lodge and others, that the will is determined by the strongest motive, and that it is for each man to decide, it is still plain that an adequate cause is required for the voluntary attention which makes one motive stronger than all the rest. And if ' character ' be invoked, how does character come to be such? There is good reason, therefore, to appreciate Professor Bowne's statement :—

> How a free man will act, does not find its sufficient ground in the antecedent phenomena alone, but also in the mystery of self-determination. And this is something which cannot be mechanically analysed or deduced as a necessary resultant; it can only be experienced. The attempt to analyse it contradicts it. The attempt to construct it denies it. It can only be recognized as the central factor of personality, the condition of responsibility, and the basis of the moral life. Criticism cannot hope to construe it. It can only point it out as a fact, and show that the objections to it rest only on an imperfect understanding of thought itself.[1]

[1] *Personalism*, p. 210.

This may fairly stand as the sufficient and unshaken basis of philosophical Christian reality, on its human side. The reality of the self, and the creative actuality of its determinations, remain the bedrock of all that Christianity needs, or assumes, for its appeal to men as moral beings. It were confessedly a gain if the old terminology could be given up. 'Free will' is only justifiable as an antithesis to compulsion. And it is really redundant. For 'will' that is not free, is no will. The main and essential question is whether man has a will, or whether he is —as Mark Twain and others so dogmatically insist —'a machine and nothing more.' When a machine possessed of will-power has been fashioned, capable of self-determination whatever its environment, it will be time enough to consider afresh the assertions of so-called 'Determinism.' 'So-called' because it is too manifest to need elaboration that if a man is 'determined' *ab extra*, then the only word that expresses his situation is 'Determinedism.'[1] The Christian, on the other hand, is the true Determinist, because he and he alone, as distinct though not apart from his heredity and environment, determines his choice, his character, his destiny. Both theoretically, therefore, and practically, in the light of

[1] The statement of M. Hamon hereupon is at once most lucid and logical, and merits appreciation for its honest perspicuity :—'Man is determined. His volitions are the result of the multifarious environments in which he lives. Historically and theoretically, responsibility is based upon free will. As the latter does not exist, responsibility vanishes. Scientifically, man is the inevitable product of the surroundings in which he lives and in which his ancestors lived. Logically, he is not responsible for his actions, for he could not help wishing them, the conditions once given. It is only by a collection of fictions that moral responsibility exists in our codes and our customs' (*The Illusion of Free Will*, p. 115).

philosophy and common sense, Christian reality stands to-day firmly based on what can only be called 'indeterminedism.' Man is not determined. He determines. His character is not created for him by heredity and environment. He himself creates it out of these materials. The fairest and clearest philosophical statement of the 'Determinist' position[1] exhibits its own fallacy, whilst on common-sense lines the self-contradiction becomes glaring. Thus for the former, Mr. Cohen says :—

> Determinism is an attempt to apply to mind and morals that principle of causation which is of universal application in the physical world, where it has proved itself so fruitful and suggestive. On this principle, all that is flows from all that has been, in such a way that, given a complete knowledge of the capacities of all the forces in operation at any one time, the world a century hence could be predicted with mathematical accuracy. So likewise with human nature.[2]

The calm audacity of the last five words here is indeed noteworthy. For they simply beg the whole question. The suggested definition, moreover, is equally useless and misleading; because the 'complete knowledge' required is as quixotic an impossibility as the famous boast of Archimedes—'Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum strong enough, and I will move the world.' Besides which, such 'complete knowledge,' or the bare possibility

[1] Mr. Chapman Cohen's little volume *Determinism or Free Will*—decidedly the ablest brief statement in print of the 'Determinist' theory.

[2] p. 93.

of it, assumes that human nature is a closed system, which is the very thing that philosophy—as represented by the above-named thinkers, and especially by Professor Bergson—emphatically denies, and personal consciousness definitely contradicts. Human nature differs from nature in this very regard, that its actions are unpredictable. Nor can any amount of added knowledge make it predictable; because it is creative and not merely mechanical. How utterly vain are the reiterated attempts to formulate a 'Determinism' true to human nature as we know it, has been already shown in the flagrant self-contradiction of Mark Twain's very preface, to his one hundred and sixty pages of 'demonstration,' that 'man is a machine and nothing more.' Moreover, Mr. Blatchford—who has done more than any man to popularize 'Determinism' in this country—after reiterating that man is nothing but a creature of heredity and environment, so that he cannot help anything he does, and is not responsible at all or blameworthy for his actions, proceeds to declare:—

> I believe that I am what heredity and environment have made me, but *I know* that *I can make myself better or worse, if I try.*[1]

Seeing that no self-contradiction could be more complete, that should be sufficient as to the worth of the theory involved.

The same applies really to the theological form of it which obtains in Calvinism. Even Jonathan Edwards, the most uncompromising advocate of

[1] *God and My Neighbour*, p. 144.

Predestination—which is only religious determinedism—records concerning himself:—

> Resolved, when I am most conscious of provocation to ill nature and anger, that I will strive most to feel and act good-naturedly.

An excellent resolution, but absolutely self-contradictory. For it admits of unmistakable summary, as true as brief; viz. that any being which is capable of resolving, 'I will,' cannot be spiritually predestined, even by omnipotence.

(3) As to Ethics

On the understanding, therefore, that human nature is free enough to make moral choice—without which any further discussion of religion or conduct would be vain—we may proceed to the inquiry as to how Christian reality is affected by modern thought on ethical lines. The multiplied attempts of non-Christian or anti-Christian thinkers, in these days, to formulate ethical systems apart from religion, and especially without any reference to divine or supernatural sanctions, are well known. The pertinent query here is, Have they so far succeeded as to discredit the Christian ethics, and offer mankind to-day any sounder system of applied morality? The grounds for denying this may be briefly summarized.

The late Professor of Latin at Owens College, Manchester, in a scholarly little work—unfortunately now out of print—made the following strong statements:—

> Is it or is it not the case, that at the beginning of the Christian era there was such a radical change

wrought in the light and life of the world, that the laws of strict induction require us to suppose for its production a cause distinctly superhuman? I have tried to give my reasons for believing that the Christian ethics so far transcend the ethics of any or all the Pagan systems in purity, and in power, as to compel us to assume for them an origin differing in kind from the origin of any purely human system.

Not only because the system of Christian ethics transcends all others in purity, but because this perfect purity is reached by a scientific method of development, is based on a sure foundation, and has shown itself by far the most powerful help that the world has known for its regeneration, do we claim for it an origin directly and immediately divine.

It was much that Christianity based morality no longer on the shifting sands of speculation, but on the revealed condition and destiny of man, and spoke with authority on his end of life. It was much that it embraced the whole nature of man within the compass of its moral laws, and taught him to present his whole being, body, soul, and spirit, a living sacrifice, which was but his reasonable service. But it was more, far more than all the rest, that it made the mainspring of all right action to consist in an enthusiasm that all might feel, and that the laws of its kingdom might be known and obeyed by the meanest and humblest of its subjects.[1]

That was half a century ago. Has the advance of knowledge, historical, critical, scientific, contradicted

[1] *The Light of the World*, Professor A. S. Wilkins (Macmillan), pp. viii., 146, 148.

this estimate, or annulled its significance by modifications which cannot be ignored? Truly, efforts to establish this contention have not been wanting. Advocates of Hedonism, Utilitarianism, Positivism, together with the apostles of evolution, Clifford, Spencer, Huxley, and Haeckel, have striven to give men what they deemed truer and better systems. John Stuart Mill sought to show where the Christian ethic needed supplementing; F. W. Newman went farther, and avowed that it needed correcting. Others have sought to disparage it by declaring that it is not 'original.' But the success of all these endeavours has been limited to very narrow circles. In all that is essential to Christian reality, we may definitely avow that nothing has been done which really affects the estimate of Strauss quoted above, or avails to diminish the force of Professor Seeley's tribute. It would, indeed, be easy to fill pages with the candid acknowledgements of cultured unbelievers to this effect. But it is scarcely necessary. There is nothing in philosophic ethics, as deduced from evolutionary premisses, to conflict with the basal principles of Christian ethics. As a 'Rationalist' writer, Mr. S. Laing, puts it:—

> The Christian religion is a fact which for nineteen centuries has proved on the whole in accordance with other facts, and with the deepest feelings and highest aspirations of the noblest men and women of the foremost races in the progressive march of civilization. It requires no laboured train of reasoning and reflection to make us feel that right is right, and that it is better for ourselves and others to act on such precepts as those of loving our neighbours as ourselves and doing as we would

be done by, rather than to reverse these rules and obey the selfish promptings of our animal nature.

So definitely and emphatically does 'free thought' anticipate with contradiction the philosophy of Nietzsche and his German following.[1]

As regards distinctively Christian ethics, their essentials have only to be fairly stated and estimated, to justify the eulogy which even Professor Haeckel felt constrained to utter. These, let us not forget, are his own words :—

> Beyond all doubt the present degree of human culture owes in great part its perfection to the propagation of the Christian system of morals and its ennobling influence. . . . Looked at from the point of view of our present stage of culture, the ethic of

[1] As these pages are being written comes the account of the latest wholesale German murders, which goes mounting up. Not content with the *Falaba*, the *Lusitania*, and the *Arabic*, these disciples of Nietzsche and Treitschke and Bismarck have wrecked another passenger ship, the *Persia*, without warning, and knowing it to be quite free from warlike aims or powers. Well enough we know how to estimate the protests of Austria that it was not their doing. The ship was English. That is enough for German morality. The additional murder of hundreds of innocent women and children by cowardly Zeppelins hovering over undefended towns, with no bearing whatever on the military situation, but falsely represented to the German nation as the 'bombardment of fortified cities,' is quite within the scope of Bethmann-Hollweg's ethics. So, too, is the latest submarine threat to destroy all ships indiscriminately without warning. Well may Viscount Bryce say that 'we have to-day the awful spectacle of a State proclaiming itself to be above morality and willing to work all wickedness to achieve its own ends. Hardly ever before has such an atrocious doctrine been proclaimed ; but this State is acting on it.' And now the Kaiser, in his New Year's address, besides all the lying references to the Allies' aims and doings, has the effrontery to assert that his troops will gain 'imperishable glory for the Fatherland, with God's gracious help.' If such procedures had any relation to Christian ethics —beyond blasphemy—Christianity would indeed deserve the utmost execration of its enemies.

> Christianity appears to us much more perfect and pure than that of any other religion.[1]

He objects, however, to 'untenable myths and so-called revelations.' So do we. But he has to be reminded, and many others with him, that to stigmatize revelation is not to disprove it. Nor are historic realities got rid of by calling them 'myths.' The foundations of Christian ethics are deeply laid in God as revealed by Jesus Christ, and in human nature as being both moral and immortal. The rational grounds for regarding these foundations as realities are sufficiently exhibited elsewhere.

It is here most to the point to state plainly wherein the specific Christianness of Christian ethics consists. Then we shall be able to see whether modern light has illuminated or destroyed their sufficiency and potency. In addition to the general principles of ethics—say, for a convenient and reliable summary, as set forth by Mr. J. S. Mackenzie in his *Manual of Ethics*[2]—what are the main elements of that ideal of character and conduct which deserves the specific name of Christian ethics? In summary they are these.

(i.) The ideal of character, the standard of duty, the source of obligation, are all not only rooted in God, but in God as set before men in and by Jesus Christ.

(ii.) This conception of God is unmistakably that of the universal Father—in the broadest, purest, tenderest, and fullest acceptance of that term. The unlimited Fatherhood of God is the unequivocal

[1] *Confession of Faith of a Man of Science*, pp. 63, 66.
[2] University Tutorial Press.

foundation of the First Great Command on which Jesus laid such stress.

(iii.) The Second Great Command is neither more nor less than the insistence upon the brotherhood of men which follows necessarily from the universal Fatherhood of God. This brotherly relationship of man to man, through relation to God as Father, is at once the closest, the noblest, the most practical and the most potent, that has ever been or can be conceived.

(iv.) The enforcement of brotherhood by all the authority of the Divine Fatherhood creates an unparalleled source of obligation, and makes the sense of duty as much stronger as higher and more comprehensive, than that which comes from any other philosophy or religion.

(v.) This 'law of Christ' not only does most to ensure good, but, in view of the actuality of moral evil in human life, goes to the root of it in the individual will. 'Out of the heart,' said Jesus, 'proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries . . . and all the things that defile the man.' The homeliness of this avowal does not in the least lessen its psychological accuracy, or its moral significance. It was given—as surely ethical principles need be—for the 'common people,' and, as such, made intelligible for them. But its assumption, that a man is something more than his heredity and environment, is precisely what is increasingly brought home to us today, by any honest recognition of the testimony of our own consciousness.[1]

[1] This point is of such great importance that it may be well to add to preceding considerations these testimonies from witnesses whose words should carry weight. Said Professor Poynting :—'We are more certain of our powers of choice and responsibility than of any other

(vi.) The ideal involved connotes the strongest opposition to moral evil in all its forms, because it is dependent upon a personal relationship—which means for every true believer the closest attachment to the greatest antithesis to evil. 'We make it our tenderest passion and our highest ambition, whether we live or die, to be pleasing to Him our Lord,' said Paul.[1] So that Mr. Lecky, after all, only mildly echoed him in his phrase 'not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice.' The man who lives 'with Christ,' or 'in Christ,' must and does 'abhor that which is evil,' as no other can.

(vii.) But the Christian ethic is far from being only negative. It is supreme positiveness expressed

fact physical or psychical. We are certain, all of us in everyday life, that this power of choice exists, whatever conclusion we may come to in the quiet of our studies. The freedom of choice is unlike anything else in nature—it is a simple fact' (*Hibbert Journal*, July, 1903). And the late Professor James, America's foremost psychologist, wrote:—'The last word here is ignorance. "The consciousness doesn't count," these "Deterministic" reasoners say; "it doesn't exist for science, it is *nil*; you mustn't think about it at all." The intensely reckless character of all this needs no comment. It is making the mechanical theory true *per fas aut nefas*. My conclusion is that to urge the automaton theory upon us, as it is now urged, upon purely *a priori* and *quasi*-metaphysical grounds, is an unwarrantable impertinence in the present state of psychology' (*Psychology*, vol. i., pp. 138, 454). And even Mr. McCabe, Haeckel's henchman in this country, says, in the very midst of his vehement defence of Haeckel's Monism:—'But the fact remains, and it is a scientific, a psychological fact, that we are conscious of being able to influence our character and our actions, and so we cannot deny our responsibility within limits. It is for ethics and psychology to determine those limits and to readjust our terms and conceptions. . . . A man can control his actions to a great extent, and will to that extent be responsible for them. On that we have the witness of consciousness' (*Haeckel's Critics Answered*, pp. 60, 118). So we have a most modern physicist, a most eminent psychologist, and a most virulent opponent of everything Christian, combining to confirm the fundamental principle of the ethics of Jesus.

[1] 2 Cor. v. 9.

in one word—as has been above acknowledged, 'This higher-toned goodness which we call holiness.' Such 'holiness' is the expression of Christ's 'extra.'[1] Whether it be scorned by unbelievers, and ignored or misrepresented by believers, or not, it is the true test by which Christianity stands or falls. It is absolutely unique in the world's moral and religious conceptions, ancient or modern. Nothing is easier, of course, than the criticism of this special moral ideal on practical grounds. That is, however, only a testimony to its superiority. The ethical philosophy which transfers murder and adultery from the realm of action to that of thought; which puts sins of omission on the same moral level as those of commission; and which finally exalts love above all else, cannot but involve difficulties so great as to create human antagonism, and invite the keenest criticism for those who venture to adopt it. But Dean Church is right.

> Human nature is wayward and strange in the proportion which it keeps in its perceptions of duty, in its efforts and achievements. But for all this, it seems to me idle to deny that men in Christian times have reached a higher level, and have kept it, in social and civil life, than they ever reached before, and that this is distinctly to be traced to the presence and action in society of Christian morality.[2]

The Christian ethical standard of holiness is by no means finally expounded at 'Conventions,' or in Retreats, or specifically 'spiritual' literature. The

[1] See Matt. v. 47, τί περισσὸν ποιεῖτε.
[2] *The Gifts of Civilization*, p. 147.

whole New Testament is witness to its sanity and sobriety, no less than to its moral sensitiveness and lofty standard of conduct. Three other distinct characteristics testify to this.

(viii.) Christian ethics cover the whole area of human life so completely, that nothing is left outside its influence. 'Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus—all to the glory of God.'[1] In such unmistakable terms the Apostle rightly expressed the very soul of the Christian ethic. For the true Christian there can be no 'secular.' But it is beyond controversy, that if all the affairs of men and nations were conducted on what the New Testament terms 'holy' principles, not only would there be war no more, but the horrid list of 'the works of the flesh' which still curse our boasted civilization, would be replaced by 'the fruit of the spirit' such as would in actuality bring a better day for humanity, than any modern economic schemes can devise, and a more truly 'golden age' than the ancient poets ever dreamed.

(ix.) For the call to the highest which the Christian ethic connotes is not merely addressed, as such a call ever must be, to the individual soul, but impartially to every human being. For it there is 'neither male nor female, bond nor free.' 'Jew,' 'Greek,' 'Roman,' 'Barbarian,' 'Scythian,' were at the very outset of its mission all insignificant terms. It never contemplated any spiritual aristocracy. Nor did any priestly caste, or class, ever enter into its consideration. It was not until human nature had begun to revolt against Christ's

[1] 1 Cor. x. 31; Col. iii. 17.

ethic, that any sacerdotal class became possible. His words are for ever unequivocal and unmistakable.

> They came to Capernaum, and when He was in the house He asked them, What were you talking about so earnestly on the way? But they made no answer. For they had been arguing as to which of them was the chief. So when He had sat down, He called the twelve and said to them, If any one is longing to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all. . . . And when they heard what Jesus had said, they began to be highly indignant in regard to James and John. But when Jesus had called them to Him He said, You know that those who occupy the position of rulers amongst the nations lord it over those beneath them, and their great men wield authority with a high hand. But it is not so among you. Rather, if any one in your company wants to be great, let him be the servant of the rest; and if any one sets his mind on being chief, he shall be the slave of all.[1]

How sadly such a standard was afterwards lowered through the growth of ecclesiasticism, we know too well. Even now, if Christ's words were heeded as they deserve, would there be much room for discussion as to whether 'local preachers' were qualified to conduct the most tender and homely as well as sacred service in Christian worship? What the Apostle would have said to the complaint recently, that it was 'irregular' for various sections of the Christian Church to commemorate together, on the eve of battle, the death of Christ their Lord, it is not difficult to imagine. His

[1] Mark ix. 31, x. 42.

attitude was as unmistakable as his Master's, viz. that whatever the Gospel holds of good, it holds for every human being, without distinction of sex or age, ecclesiastical or social position.[1] Even in sending back to his master the runaway slave who had become a Christian, Paul uses the same term of affection for the slave as for his master—each was to him in the Gospel ' a brother beloved.' This was, indeed, the axe laid to the root of the upas-tree of slavery. The history of the further working of this principle belongs to other occasions. But how it still operates may be well illustrated by a modern instance. As to its effect upon the native mind in South Africa, not so long since, the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent wrote thus :—

> Even the proper religion is dangerous in its effect upon the childish mind of the native. He is taught that there is one Supreme Being, and that he need fear nobody and respect nobody but Him in whose eyes the white man and the black man are as one. This is implanted in his mind as a fundamental truth, and he assimilates it in the wrong way; and instead of being humble and respectful to

[1] In these days in which so much stress is laid upon the excellences of Buddhism, it is well to note here its contrast with the Christian ethic. In his *Buddhist Catechism*, Suhadra Bhikshu, who claims authority, points out that the only real disciples of the Buddha are those who enter the special brotherhood of the Elect. The laymen must take five vows, and may take eight. But that is not enough. ' Cannot the layman too attain to perfection? (Answer) No, this is impossible. They alone can reach Nirvana in this present life who have taken ten vows '—which involve amongst other things ' to live in voluntary poverty.' That is, in plain speech, by doing no work and living the life of a beggar. So that if all men were to be Buddhist saints indeed, it would go hardly with modern civilization, to say nothing of literature or science.

those who are his superiors, he considers himself their equal.

(x.) Such a witness suggests the whole influence of Christian Missions in the darkest places of the earth. This has been sufficiently noted above, and all that need here be emphasized is the plain fact, which corresponds to unmistakable doctrine, that the Christian ethic, in all its purifying and ennobling potency, is not only addressed to all men without respect to persons,[1] but also with equal disregard of places. In other words, Christian ethics are not only intended for all men, but adapted to all mankind. The proof of this is to be found, not in words, but in lives, and characters, and events. Missionary records, as shown above, demonstrate this beyond all honest doubt. Facts are amply sufficient to answer all the critics of missionary devotion. Seeing, however, that Japan is so often referred to, as showing the needlessness of interfering with the religion of any country which shows so many fine qualities, the witness of Professor Nitobé, of the University of Kyoto, is worth noticing again. In his most interesting work upon *Bushido, the Soul of Japan*, he says :—

> The seeds of the Kingdom, as vouched for and apprehended by the Japanese mind, blossomed in Bushido. Now its days are closing—sad to say

[1] Herein the Apostle's avowed commission contrasts vividly with the message of Buddhism just mentioned. The saints, he declared, were to learn from him 'the riches of this glorious mystery among the nations, viz. Christ in you the hope of glory; whom we proclaim, putting it plainly before all men, and teaching every man wisely, so as to present every man completely developed in Christ Jesus.'

before its full fruition—and we turn in every direction for other sources of sweetness and light, of strength and comfort; but among them there is as yet nothing found to take its place. The only other ethical system which is powerful enough to cope with Utilitarianism and Materialism is Christianity, in comparison with which Bushido, it must be confessed, is like the 'dimly burning wick' which the Messiah was proclaimed not to quench but to fan into a flame.[1]

It is a long time since Lord Lawrence, whose acquaintance with India not even the R.P.A. will deny, said deliberately :—

> Notwithstanding all that the English people have done to benefit India, the missionaries have done more than all other agencies combined.

But if a native must know more than any foreigner, then the testimony of the late Babu Keshub Chunder Sen, the leader of the Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta, should be sufficient to endorse the adaptability of the Christian ethic to that vast realm, beyond all controversy.

> It is needless for me to bestow eulogium upon such devoted friends and tried benefactors of our country as the missionaries. They have brought us Christ. They have given us the high code of Christian ethics, and their teaching and example have secretly influenced and won thousands of non-Christian Hindus. Native society is being roused, enlightened, and reformed, under the influence of Christian education.

[1] p. 190.

These, then, are the main elements, however imperfectly here stated, of those ethical principles which are distinctively Christian. They are, to philosophic ethics, as the fragrant flowers and precious fruits of a good tree are to its stem and roots—with just this difference, that they have been grafted on by His hand concerning whom Professor Gardner has well said that—

> The Founder of Christianity stands above all other religious teachers because, alike in life and in words, He taught that purity of heart leads a man to the vision of God; that evil proceeding out of the heart defiles and corrupts his whole being; that sin consists not in deed, but in intention; that righteousness consists not in the keeping of outward rules, but in a right attitude of spirit. The whole merit of the Christian religion is that it is one which is not bound to formulae or rules; that it has a spring of vitality, and can adapt itself to the hopes and the needs of successive generations. The teaching is very general; it is adapted not merely to the times or to the Jewish race, but to mankind.[1]

Christian reality in ethics represents the grafting of the revelation of Jesus upon the natural human stock. That was, indeed, the purpose of His whole mission, as He plainly said.

> Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy, but to complete.[2]

[1] *An Historic View of the New Testament*, pp. 88, 89, 93.

[2] It is very unfortunate that the Revisers did not change the word 'fulfil' in this case, for it fails, in the case of nineteen readers or hearers out of twenty, to convey Christ's meaning.

If the hackneyed question as to the originality of Christ's mission here occurs once more, it is enough to reply, with Wernle, that—

> The will of God, as it is fully and completely contained in the Sermon on the Mount, is no less entirely distinguished from the claims of the later Church than from the Jewish law; and it ought really to produce an impression of entire novelty among us at the present day.

Who will venture to say whether a sovereign fresh from the mint is new or old? In sober truth it is manifestly both. The metal of which it consists is as old as the globe; the minting is but of yesterday. The gold is old, but the coin is new. Its originality is in the image it bears. Even so when we turn to the clearest and strongest principles Christ ever enunciated—the two Great Commands. Both of them are to be found in the Old Covenant. But the words in Deuteronomy are no more the Christian law, than the ore which has lain buried in sand or rock for countless ages is the golden coin which now constitutes our final standard of value. God, whom the Christian ethic calls upon men to love, is no longer the tribal deity of a little nation struggling into being, but the one, only, awful God of the whole universe, Who yet is to poor humanity as a father to his child. Our 'neighbour' is no more merely a fellow countryman, so that patriotism consists in devotion to the 'mother country' or love of the 'fatherland,' but the unlimited love of man as man, and the recognition of a brotherhood which is as real

as unbounded, because based on the Divine Fatherhood.

How this same principle applies to the older details of the moral law, scarcely needs to be mentioned. We hear, indeed, still, in the Christian realm, too much of 'The Ten Commandments'—as if they constituted the Christian law. Whereas Christ has Himself made it unmistakable that the keeping of the whole of them, as they stand, would never make a man His true disciple. Nay, more. However reverently we may think of the Fourth Commandment, which is the most specific injunction of all, it must be acknowledged that as the letter of it is printed and read in public, no Christian living thinks of keeping it.[1] The Lord's Day means to him much more of truth and liberty, of hope and love, along with a deeper, higher, broader standard of holiness, than the Jewish Sabbath could ever convey. Indeed, as to all these Commandments, whilst far from dismissing or abolishing them, what Christ did—comprehensively, in the two concerning which He said, 'There is no other command greater than these; on these two hang all the law and the prophets,' and specifically, in detailed teachings—was to clear from all local and transient elements, and intensify beyond measure by transferring from the realm of deeds to that of thoughts, from material limitations to unlimited spiritual principles. 'We will not kill,' says the well-meaning but misguided Pacifist to-day, as if

[1] Not even the small misguided section of modern Christianity which calls itself 'Seventh-day Adventists.' Great stress, indeed, is laid upon the exact day, but as the command for that day actually stands, no one of them keeps it.

that constituted Christ's law.[1] Whereas His own word, through one of His most trusted disciples, is that 'Whoso hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life,' i.e. filial communion with God.

It seems specially necessary also, in these days, to show how the Christian ethic is related to conscience, for no little confusion yet obtains in this regard. Some there are who, with Haeckel, pour pseudo-philosophic scorn upon Kant's 'kategorical imperative' and what it stands for. Others, both believing and unbelieving, bitterly contemn the Christian conscience for having anything to do with war, or even —in certain extreme instances—with politics, or economics, or sociology. But they are all alike unwarranted. Men were conscientious long before Christ came; or, for that matter, long before Joseph so nobly spurned that which he believed to be wrong. But what a man should spurn to-day, and why he should give himself and all he has to other purposes, is another matter, and requires much more careful consideration than it generally gets. Take, for instance, the statement of the most popular opponent in this country of everything Christian.

The religious mind loves mysteries. Conscience has always been set down as a mystery by religious

[1] Nothing is more common than the sweeping generalization of Pacifists that never for any reason whatever can a Christian kill any one, entirely ignoring the fact that Jesus Himself contradicts them. Thus in Luke xvii. 2 He gives definite judgement that, under special circumstances, a man of a certain type should be killed. Death by forcible drowning is quite as real as from any machine-gun or bayonet.

people. It has been called 'the still small voice,' and we have been taught that it is a supernatural kind of sense by which man is guided in his knowledge of good and evil.

If conscience were what religious people think it is—a kind of heavenly voice whispering to us what things are right and wrong—we should expect to find its teachings constant. It would not have one rule of morality for the guidance of an Englishman, and another rule of morality for the guidance of a Turk. It would not change its moral code as the man it is supposed to guide changes his beliefs, through education and experience. It would not give such widely different direction to different men of the same age and nation.

If conscience were really a supernatural guide to right conduct, it would always and everywhere tell man what is eternally right or eternally wrong. But conscience is changeable and uncertain. It is Geographical, in that it is not the same in one country as another; Historical, it is not the same in one age as in another; Personal, not the same in one person as in another; Changeable, it alters with its owner's mind.[1]

There is little room for doubt that although all this is entirely fallacious, the writer here voices what many believers, and most unbelievers, would quite endorse. So much the more need is there to correct it. For the confusion is as serious as it is common. In the brevity which is here inevitable,[2] it must

[1] *Not Guilty*, by R. Blatchford, p. 149.

[2] For a fuller statement I must refer the reader to my booklet entitled *Guilty—a Tribute to the Bottom Man*, published (C. H. Kelly) in reply to Mr. Blatchford's *Not Guilty*, pp. 72–79. For ordinary readers the best brief summary of the matter will be found in two small brochures which deserve much more notice than they are likely to get, viz.

suffice to say, with simple directness, that the conscience is *not* 'a kind of heavenly voice whispering to us what things are right and wrong.' Rather is the truth expressed by Mr. Gowan.

> The conscience is not concerned with what is right or wrong in itself. It does not determine right or wrong. It is concerned simply with a person's beliefs, and his actions in connexion with his beliefs. A man's conscience does not condemn him for what is wrong, but for what he believes to be wrong at the time of acting. A man's conscience does not commend him for doing absolute right, but for what he believes to be right at the time of acting.[1]

In a word, 'The conscience is a castigator, not a judge; a goader to what the judgement says is duty, not a determiner of what duty is.' Or, as Mr. Forrow puts it:—

> Conscience represents the pressure of the sense of divine obligation. This is the foundation of morality. Conscience does not determine how effect shall be given to its approval; that is the province of the understanding.
>
> Conscience is not, as Pascal seemed to think, different in different nations and periods. Take the case of the Hindu and the Christian mother; one casts her child into the Ganges as an offering to Vishnu, the other trains her child up for God.

The Conscience, by John and George Gowan (Elliot Stock), and *The Compass of the Unknown*, by Alex. Forrow (Partridge & Co.). For a full discussion of the case from another standpoint, see the *Fernley Lecture for* 1888, by Dr. W. T. Davison.

[1] p. 24.

The difference is not in the conscience at all, but in the understanding ; that of the Hindu mother is darkened and ignorant, the other is illuminated and enlightened. This is the great argument for and obligation of Christian Missions, i.e. to diffuse the light of the Gospel. In old Sparta, Conscience approved of that course which would secure the largest good of the Commonwealth. The understanding decided that this would be best secured by encouraging theft, and maintenance of drunken helots. Another State will decide differently, not because the Conscience acts differently, but because the sense of the community or understanding will differ in its view of means to ends.

Thus Kant was right when he declared that an erring Conscience was a chimaera. But he must be understood on Shakespeare's lines, i.e. on the understanding that the function of conscience is dynamic, not judicial. ' Thus conscience does make cowards of us all ' is true. But it is not true that conscience makes us moral philosophers. This, no more, no less, is what is valid in the avowal that conscience is infallible and cannot be educated. When, judged by any high standard, conscientious conduct is wrong—as it often is—the wrong is not in the conscience, but in the moral judgement.

Conscience always declares for righteous intentions, whenever there exists the perception of a wrong intention. A man does infallibly know when he means to do wrong, and he does infallibly feel condemned for such intention.

When it is said that the recognition of this distinction compels us ' to invent a new phrase such as " moral

opinion," "moral judgement," or the like, to represent the element in man's moral nature which may be mistaken, which admits of education, enlightenment, and progress,' the only true reply must be that it is high time such a new phrase should be employed, to save men's minds from confusion, and the Christian ethic from reproach. Nor is it of any avail to say, *per contra*, that 'it answers no good end to invent an abstract conscience which, like a theoretical Pope when speaking *ex cathedra*, cannot err.' For an abstract conscience is alike unthinkable and here inapplicable. There is nothing 'abstract' about the kategorical imperative which, in the soul of every moral being, affirms and commands the oughtness of right. Nothing more personal can be conceived. And further, we must note that it cannot truly be said that 'conscience is an organ of moral judgement which, like all other organs, but far more than any other, needs to be instructed and trained if it is to be perfected.' For the imperfection which produces all the disharmonies hinted at above, manifestly resides not in the conscience but in the moral judgement. That, in the light of facts, is not open to question. The Moslem with four wives is as conscientious, and as happy in following his conscience, as the Christian with one.

In other words, whatever may be the tendencies or practices of modern psychology in regard to 'conscience,' the distinction between the oughtness of right and the rightness of right, is absolute and eternal. They can never truthfully be confused, nor inseparably combined. Every moral being, as such, knows that he *ought* to do *right*. There can

be no such thing as an erring conscience, because no moral being can be found who believes that he ought to do what he believes to be wrong; or that he can please himself in doing or not doing what he believes to be right. The conscientious man is not one who does what is right, but one who does what he believes to be right. Whether his belief is justified or not, whether it is wise and true and good, or the opposite, is a matter for definite consideration and decision on moral principles, either by himself, or by others, or by both combined. Even as Jesus Himself said to those around Him :—

> Yea, and why even of yourselves do you not discern what is right?[1]

Here again, conscience tells us that we ought not only to do the right we know, but to seek to know that it is truly right, according to the standard which we acknowledge. What that standard should be, need not here be argued. The Christian conscience is content with the words of one of Germany's greatest philosophers, Hermann Lotze, that—

> Only love for the living God, and longing to be approved by Him, is the scientific as it is the Christian basis of morality, and science will never find a firmer basis, nor life a surer.

No statement of the true principle herein can be more clear or final than that of the Apostle Paul :—

> I know, and am assured by my communion with the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean

[1] Luke xii. 57.

in itself, though to one who regards anything as unclean, to him it is unclean.

That every man ought to abstain from what he believes to be unclean, is assumed; that he should get to know what is or is not unclean, is the very lesson enjoined. So in distinguishing between the obligation of right and the nature of right, we see how Christ emphasized the former, by adding the love of the Father to the sovereignty of God, and the love of every man to the love of a national neighbour. As to the latter, indeed, His whole teaching was directed to that end, and was confirmed by the Apostles, who all endorsed the standard of duty contained in Paul's statement—' Love works no ill to one's fellow man, so that love is the true and full completion of the law.'

What, then, we may ask, has the light of our modern knowledge done for this element in the Christian ethic? In its new stress upon psychology and enhanced respect for metaphysics, has it disproved or rendered invalid the kategorical imperative which makes every man who is human know that, whether he does what he knows to be the good and avoids the evil or not, he *ought* to do it, and cannot but condemn himself if he wills not to do what thus to him is right? Assuredly it has not. Previous to the War the progress of education only confirmed this real ' conscience ' which it could neither create nor destroy. But the frightful calamity which has overwhelmed Europe has at least rendered this service to humanity, that it has made the oughtness of right, and the consequent wrongness of wrong, more vividly impressive than ever before in the world's history. It is not too much to say that for

this very reason the name of ' German ' has become a term of shame throughout civilization. And that not because of lack of knowledge, or crookedness of moral judgement, but because of the perversity of acting on the diabolical principle, ' Evil, be thou my good.' ' We knew it to be wrong,' said the Chancellor, ' but we did it.' That is immorality incarnate.

In compelling us, then, to think more clearly, modern light has rendered great service to Christian ethics. The definition of conscience which will stand must be on these lines—that conscience is that action of the human mind whereby our moral nature asserts itself in causing a feeling of approbation or condemnation, obligation or rejection, in regard to opportunities to be, or to do, what a person then believes to be right or wrong. When this is understood, then, to an extent never before known, comes the influence of modern knowledge to show mankind what deserves to be considered right, and therefore obligatory, or wrong, and therefore prohibited. That there are other standards than the Christian cannot be denied. Whether the Hedonist, or Utilitarian, or Pragmatist, or Positivist, or Secularist standards of right should be adopted, is matter for discussion elsewhere. Here once more the true voice of conscience says, ' Let every man be fully convinced in his own mind.' Comte, Mill, Spencer, Martineau, James, Holyoake, Bradlaugh, were all conscientious men. Every man must be his own judge as to which standard of right is right to him. Conscience demands from every one, without respect of age, or sex, or clime, or position, ' the utmost for the highest.' One may be forgiven for

affirming—which is all that can be done here—that in the fiercest modern light that can beat on any creed, the prophet Micah's standard remains only the more vividly worthy to be called the 'highest.'

> He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Save that when its bright ray is caught by the Gospel prism, it is made yet more significant and beneficent, as in its further analysis by the Apostle.

> Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure or lovely, whatever is well spoken of; if there be anything really noble or praiseworthy, take all these into full account. The principles which you not only learned and accepted, but heard from me and saw exemplified in me, put these into practice, and the God of peace will be with you.[1]

No words can be found which would at once so worthily, so comprehensively, and so succinctly express Christian reality in the light of modern philosophy. For here is unmistakable and ample recognition of the three great elements which constitute its essence. Theism, moral responsibility, highest ethics, are here inseparably intertwined. These, in modern light, have only become—when all keenest scrutiny is applied—more clear, more significant, more potent. In spite of, or rather

[1] Phil. iv. 8.

because of, to-day's developments, whereby 'many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased,' the appreciation of God, the human soul, and holy duty, remains the noblest exercise of thought, the hall-mark of loftiest dignity, and the measure of deepest responsibility for all members of the human race.

IV

CHRISTIAN REALITY—BIBLICAL

What geology has accomplished for the study of the earth's crust, historical criticism is doing for the structure of Scripture. It is familiarizing us with what we may call the moral stratification of Scripture. In other words, it directs attention to the progressive character of revelation. . . . No longer is it necessary to defend the command of God to Saul to slaughter the Amalekites as though it were given to our own King George, nor need a Christian feel under any obligation to justify the language of the imprecatory psalms, or the commendation of the treacherous act of Jael. These belong to a more rudimentary period, and must be judged with reference to the standard of morality prevailing in their respective generations. There is growth in the knowledge of God, in moral perception, in moral ideal, until that which is perfect is come.—Rev. F. L. Wiseman, in *The Chief Corner-stone*, p. 276.

In relation to the Bible it is obvious that there are critics and critics, differing from one another by a whole diameter; but the measure of diversity observable does not interfere with the belief that criticism, in the sense of careful examination of the Bible, is not only valid but necessary, and that assured results have been attained by reasonable criticism, using sound methods. —Dr. W. T. Davison, in *The Chief Corner-stone*, p. 6.

First as regards Adam and Eve, observe, to begin with, that long before Darwin, the story of man in Paradise was recognized by thoughtful theologians as allegorical. Indeed, read with unprejudiced eyes, the first chapters of Genesis ought always to have been seen to be a poem, as distinguished from a history; nor could it ever have been mistaken for a history, but for preconceived ideas on the matter of inspiration.—*Thoughts on Religion*, by Professor G. J. Romanes, p. 176.

The Old Testament, therefore, presents a great many stumbling-blocks. Notwithstanding its unmistakable religious inspiration and its outlook towards a more spiritual religion, only when it is interpreted by a certain clue does it act upon us with a wholly good result. That clue we think we have found; that spirit we may claim to possess. The clue is the Person and revelation of Christ—the Spirit is the spirit that is given to those who believe in Him.—*Reconstruction*, by Dr. R. F. Horton, p. 201.

IV

CHRISTIAN REALITY—BIBLICAL

Upon the vast and vexed theme of the modern appreciation of the Bible, it is here absolutely necessary to say something, although it is so fully discussed elsewhere.[1] Even a mere summary of present-day religion in these realms would be mockingly defective, if it contained no reference to a theme which is really fundamental to all the rest. Upon the question whether we may or may not trust the teachings of the Bible, turn, to an unmeasured extent, our thoughts concerning God and man, Christ and duty, our life here and hereafter. It is small wonder that around this centre, therefore, the battle of words should rage furiously; from the stalwarts of the 'Bible League' on the one hand, to the leaders of 'advanced criticism' on the other. The work of the Bible Society is wonderful

[1] So far as the present writer is concerned, reference may be made to two chapters in his volume entitled *Why Does Not God Intervene?* The questions, 'How does the Bible stand to-day?' and 'Are the churches helping the modern appreciation of the Bible?' are there fairly and frankly faced; also in the booklet entitled *The Bible in Modern Light*—in which definite answers are given to some hundred and seventy queries which have been put at Open Conferences on this subject held in all parts of the country. It is inevitable that many statements made on the above occasions should be repeated in what here follows. But the whole theme is so important, that no apology need be offered for any attempt to reaffirm the truth in other words, with additional confirmation from the expressed judgements of other thinkers.

enough to impress the hardest sceptic. It is indeed unique in the history of the world's literature. The maintenance of so vast an enterprise and the results of its efforts are equally marvellous. The publication of two such varying sources of information as 'Hastings'' *Bible Dictionary*, and the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, is a sign of the times; whilst the smaller, but none the less important, issues on the same subject are legion. To keep pace with them all would take more than the life-time of the most diligent student.

What, then, is to be the outcome of all this ferment, when the cessation of strife shall give men time and need to think of other things? One thing is certain. There must be some result. It is quite impossible that the rising generation should think or speak of the Bible just as their fathers did. Apart from all that modern Biblical knowledge and criticism involve, the ordinary educational methods of all our day schools—to say nothing of Universities—will compel them to think differently. However sincerely some conservative minds may regret it, and timid souls be anxious, that is the situation which has to be faced, and it is utterly vain to think of evading it. The positive appreciation of the Bible must be left to other occasions. The point here is, that there is much to be learned and unlearned in regard to it. What is needed above all else, is the spirit of the Bereans, who, instead of seeking to stone Paul when he contradicted some of their most cherished religious convictions, 'were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, inasmuch as they received the word spoken to them with all readiness, searching the Scriptures daily,

whether those things were so. Many therefore of them believed.' Contented ignorance, especially in religion, is indeed a tremendous stumbling-block to remove. Perhaps only time can do it. So far as the present times of transition are concerned, there can never be a worthier or more Christian attitude, whether as to this or any other question, than that expressed in the very first number of the *Minutes of the Wesleyan Conference*:—

> What are we afraid of? Of overturning our first principles? If they are false, the sooner they are overturned the better. If they are true, they will bear the strictest investigation.

But one of the ablest of the Bampton Lecturers, a scholarly and broad-minded clergyman in the Anglican Church, has recently said with commendable frankness:—

> There are two things every clergyman must know if he is to be a minister of Christ—his Bible and his people. But there are failings. Perhaps the greatest cause which makes us unprofitable servants to-day is ignorance. The English clergy was once called the Wonder of the World for its learning; but compared with the lay folk it is a learned clergy no longer. As a Church, we must use intelligent criticism and sincere exegesis, if we are to understand what is the Word of God, and be listened to by educated people.

If we may take this estimate as true—ignoring the childish and unchristian distinction between 'clergyman' and 'minister'—of the bulk of Christian teachers in this country, what is to be said of the taught? Well, at least this. Thanks

to Sunday-school work, the vast majority of the people in these realms know a little about the Bible. They have memorized the stories of the Old Testament. They have noticed some of the Psalms. They have read portions of Isaiah. In the New Testament they are fairly well acquainted with the Gospels, and certain chapters in the Epistles are familiar—in the language of the 'Authorized' Version. But beyond these items, and the general belief that in some special way the Bible is 'the Word of God,' they know—nothing. Nor are they in the least concerned to know. Very little even of ordinary Bible-reading is now done at home; but 'lessons' are taken from it on Sunday, and 'texts' are made the subjects of sermons. That is almost all. Largely attended and intelligently conducted Bible-classes are unquestionably the exception, not the rule.

Now no one possessed of any Christian feeling will say that this nebulous total is to be despised. It must, indeed, be regarded as one of the greatest ethical influences in our land. But when it is estimated at its very utmost and best, such knowledge and appreciation of the Bible as this popular attitude involves is not nearly good enough for the days that are upon us. In his most instructive little volume entitled *Sixty Years with the Bible*, the late Dr. W. N. Clarke speaks of a sermon he heard on 'the impossibility of maintaining a satisfactory adult religious life on the basis of ideas received in childhood.' The sermon showed that—

> the childish ideas are too light and small to bear the strain of advanced life. And yet the childish

ideas—the preacher said—are exactly what thousands of Christians are endeavouring to live upon all their days. The weakness of much life in the Church he attributed to this unfortunate combination of adult needs and infantile supplies. He said, in effect, 'You went out from the Sunday schools in your teens, with such ideas of God and the Bible as you had then been able to receive, and you have been living your religious life upon them ever since. In the world's work you have bent your powers to large undertakings, and have grappled with the enterprises of adult humanity. But upon the Bible and the thought of God, you have never made strenuous exercise of your maturer faculties; you have never done man's work in seeking a more adequate knowledge of these realities, but have tried to live along nourished by no larger or richer conceptions than you made your own when your powers were those of children. No wonder that your adult minds cannot more than half believe in the Bible and the God of your infancy; no wonder that your religious life is narrow and poor, your minds are perplexed by the hard questions of the day, and your energies are repressed or misdirected. You need to put away childish things, and to make your own, the Bible and the God of men.[1]

It would be difficult to find a truer representation either of the facts or their consequences. But it would be easy to multiply examples of the childishness referred to; as also to supply proofs of the harm and loss thereby occasioned.

To mention only these:—The shock which comes to numbers of sincere believers in Christ when they

[1] p. 256.

hear that the ' Fall ' as narrated in Gen. iii. was not a literal eating of a literal tree in a literal garden, but is an allegorical statement of moral tragedy. The greater shock which comes to many more when it is pointed out that the story of Adam and Eve is not to be taken as the exact biography of two individuals, but as emblematic of the origin of the human race—as, indeed, the names themselves would teach, if they were regarded. The greatest shock of all, to the majority, is when they read that the first eleven chapters of the same Old Testament portion are not bound upon Christian consciences as either literal history or exact science —let alone modern science—but are popular and legendary records, making no attempt whatever to anticipate all that we now know as science, and in the history so blending fact with folklore that these can never now be precisely differentiated. The childish outcry against sober truth herein quite prevents myriads of sincere Christians from seeing how it enhances rather than diminishes the value of these records, for all Christian purposes. They refuse to notice how it relieves them from former difficulties which had become really intolerable for this generation. It is not our business here to enter into ' Biblical controversy,' but to state, as carefully as modestly, the present situation which has to be honestly faced in the full glare of modern light. The following summary therefore will suffice ; for it has all been, and can be, abundantly justified on other occasions.[1]

[1] For those who have little time or perhaps aptitude for close study, but yet desire to know the truth herein, the following little works may be earnestly recommended :—*The Bible, Its Origin and Significance,*

(i.) It must be distinctly understood that the Bible, as a compilation of sacred writings, is subject to reason and intelligence, and is not an authority contravening or contradicting reason. (ii.) Its value and its inspiration are to be estimated, not from any preconceived theological theories, but from a fair and full examination of itself. (iii.) Whether it is inspired at all, or in what way it is inspired, are questions to be decided, not before coming to its study, but only after intelligent apprehension of what it claims for itself. (iv.) The former conception known as 'verbal inspiration' has now been definitely shown to be false, however well intended, and must be frankly given up by Christian thinkers. (v.) The names so often sincerely and reverently applied to the Bible, confer no authority upon it, but must be used with discrimination. Nothing is, of course, more common, than to hear the Bible referred to in public as 'The Word of God.' But whilst there is a true and precious sense in which it may be so called, when rightly understood, it is at the same time most necessary, for the sake of the more thoughtful hearers and our young people in these days, to make plain what is not meant by it, as well as what is. For want of such discrimination

Dr. A. S. Peake (Hodder); *What is the Bible?* Dr. Warschauer (James Clarke); *Shall We Understand the Bible?* T. Rhondda Williams (A. Black); *The Bible, Its Origin and Nature,* Dr. Marcus Dods (T. & T. Clark); *An Introduction to the Scriptures—Temple Bible,* Bishop Carpenter (Dent & Co.); *Sixty Years with the Bible,* Dr. W. N. Clarke (T. & T. Clark); *The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture,* Dr. M. Gibson (Free Church Publishing Co.); *Some Thoughts on Inspiration,* Dr. J. A. Robinson; *The Value of the Old Testament,* B. J. Snell (James Clarke); *The Higher Criticism,* Drs. Driver and Kirkpatrick (Hodder); *The Use of the Scriptures in Theology,* Dr. W. N. Clarke (T. & T. Clark).

they are left at the mercy of every blatant anti-Christian lecturer, as well as exposed to the polished sneers and specious arguments of the vast and growing propaganda of modern unbelief. (vi.) It is scarcely less misleading to speak of the Bible as the 'Book of books.' Behind that title both ignorance and superstition may find refuge; ignorance which overlooks the fact that the Bible is not a book at all, but a library consisting of more than sixty 'books' or portions, written by many authors at different times and under wholly different circumstances.[1] Even the common phrase 'Holy Bible' needs constant guarding in this respect. (vii.) The false and pernicious principle of 'all or none' must certainly be given up. In its extreme form—in which, alas, the extremeness has not prevented a wide circulation—it is thus presented to ordinary readers:—

> The Bible bases its claim for acceptance *entirely* upon the oft-repeated declaration, 'Thus saith Jehovah.' The very nature of the Book requires that if we be logical we either accept it because 'the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it,' or that

[1] Dr. Monro Gibson, whose ripe and conservative scholarship no one will question, speaks very strongly hereupon:—'We have to deal here with the extraordinary perversity and unfairness so common in our day, of treating the Scriptures as if the whole collection were only one book. Of all the unfair devices for weakening the evidences of Christianity, this is perhaps the very worst. And it is surprising that so many good Christians allow it, and encourage it—sometimes even demand it. So great is the mischief arising from this that it would seem almost a pity that, even for convenience, the sixty or more books which form our Bible are so constantly bound together in one volume' (*Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture*, p. 203).

we cast it aside as the greatest of all human impostures.[1]

The italics are the author's, and serve well to emphasize the utter falsity of his statement. For there is no single case in the whole Bible, in which the phrase 'Thus saith Jehovah' applies to the Bible at all. To say that the Bible must be cast wholly aside because we find in it unquestionable marks of human frailty and error, is as senseless and unworthy as to suggest that the child who discovers a small blemish on his mother's face is thereby warranted in despising her. If those who say such things were open to reason, Dr. Sanday's pregnant utterances in his noble Bampton Lectures on 'Inspiration' would have ended such mischievous folly long ago. Alas, they are not.[2]

(viii.) The true doctrine of 'progressive revelation' will have to be as thoroughly appreciated by believers as it is derided by unbelievers; the latter for good reasons, in that it effectively answers their blatant popular objections.

(ix.) When that is done, the standard of Christian faith, and duty, and hope, will no longer be either sought or found in the Old Testament. Indeed (x.), if we pass from the negative to the positive, it will have to be much more plainly stated that the Old Testament is of value or authority for the Christian believer, only in the degree in which it is

[1] *The World and Its God*, by Mr. Philip Mauro, p. 25. A fair specimen of this small volume, which is said to have had a large circulation, but which, in its mixture of childishness and falsity, is calculated to drive more thoughtful men to unbelief than any production of the Rationalist Press Association.

[2] *Bampton Lectures for* 1893, pp. 428–431.

endorsed, or at least not contradicted, by the New. It cannot be said too clearly or too earnestly that the New Testament, and not the whole Bible as it stands, is the Christian truth concerning God, and man's relation to God. This, as Jesus Himself said, does not destroy the Old Covenant, but completes it, so that in height and depth, as well as breadth, the Gospel of Jesus may be known as a world-wide Evangel, instead of a merely national benediction or commission.

Four other matters are also of sufficient import to merit special notice.

(xi.) The modern development of Bible study known as the 'Higher Criticism' is, when it is rightly understood, the real friend, not foe, of a genuine Christianity.[1] The fear and hate engendered against it by well-meaning but uninstructed or prejudiced believers are as unwarranted as unworthy. When the name is intelligently explained, the principle is seen to be as necessary as useful and harmless. No principle, of course, can be held responsible for the extremes to which some of its advocates would carry it. It is no more fair to make the principle of honest scrutiny—which is all that criticism involves—responsible for the vagaries of a Van Manen or a Drews, than to charge upon Christianity the wild fanaticisms of the Anabaptists. If popular religious conceptions as to the Bible will not bear examination, then they ought not to be held. Whatever else distinguishes the Christianity of the future, it will have to be known, and will be known, as following Christ—'in scorn of consequence'

[1] See especially the booklet by Drs. Driver and Kirkpatrick mentioned above.

—when He says, ' You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.'

(xii.) This applies as really to the New Testament as to the Old. Much has yet to be learned, and doubtless something to be unlearned, in regard to Gospels and Epistles. But there are ample reasons, though they cannot be shown here, for affirming that the oft-abused methods of criticism have rendered the greatest service to Christian faith, in making the New Testament as a whole—in which all the well-attested findings of a sober criticism may be included—more substantially reliable, more rationally intelligible, more practically applicable, than ever before.

(xiii.) Although the ' Canon ' of Scripture is closed by the same authority as that which fixed it, viz. the general and slowly-decided consent of Christian churches, it does not follow that inspiration, in all its reality, has ceased. The specific guidance which there is reason to believe was accorded to the early Evangelists and Apostles in what they wrote, has only passed, and is still passing, in ever-varying degrees, through other human channels: even through those devoted men and women who, to this very hour, have consecrated to the highest all their varieties of gifts, and so have helped, and are yet helping, as really to maintain and develop Christ's true Kingdom on earth as Apostles, Evangelists, Prophets, teachers, did in the first century to establish it.

(xiv.) In a word, Mr. Snell is right, as quoted above—' The Bible needs neither our eulogy nor apology. All it needs is to be understood.' But only too truly must we yet add, with him, that ' it is

not understood '—even by those often who are most attached to it.[1] But the better day is coming. The Christianity of the future will not regard the Bible as our Puritan, or even Methodist, fathers did. But they will value it all the more, for understanding it better. The accumulated knowledge of our time —which is far too real and great to be dismissed by obscurantists—has made largely obsolete the former ways of appreciating it. Dr. J. A. Robinson has said with manifest truth that—

> It is this conception of verbal inspiration which, as knowledge has increased, has produced so grave a perplexity that many men have closed the Old Testament altogether, 'and to vast multitudes, unless some help is offered them, it will presently become a sealed book.'[2]

Happily, the help is forthcoming. In the coming days, when Bibliolatry and superstition have been buried with our sacred dead, the Apostolic words

[1] The following paragraph from a well-known journal will be instructive :—' Dr. Charles R. Brown, of Yale Divinity School, has a pleasantly " hefty " way of replying to objections to his modern interpretations of Scripture, in the Boston *Congregationalist*. Recently Dr. Brown explained the death of Uzzah on somewhat naturalistic grounds. A correspondent asked, " Is it not dangerous to deal with the plain statements of the Bible in that way? " Dr. Brown's retort is courteous but crushing. " Yes, it is dangerous to think at all—you may not think straight. It is dangerous to live in the presence of the titanic forces which are all about us—a man may get hurt. But as between the peril of attributing to those early men a faulty diagnosis in the case of a sudden death (involving as it does the setting aside of a literal statement of Scripture) and the peril of attributing to God an unreasoning act of vengeance upon a well-meaning man, which would be utterly inconsistent with the character attributed to Him by Jesus Christ, I much prefer incurring the former and lesser peril." '

[2] *Some Thoughts on Inspiration*, p. 39.

will take on a significance they have never yet known—'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience, and through comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.'

(xv.) The time has come to say plainly, that the only honest, and therefore Christian, method of Biblical appreciation, is the historical method. The all-prevalent habit of taking indiscriminately any words that occur anywhere in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, and applying them either to all men or to each individual to-day, just because they are found where they are, may sometimes bring comfort to simple-minded believers; but it involves measureless possibilities of mischief, of unwarrantable misrepresentation, of excuses for a false theology. Christian teachers have no right whatever to quote verses from the first chapter of Isaiah, or the fifty-first Psalm, as if they applied to all humanity, any more than they have to quote from Psalm cxix. as if the oft-recurring phrase there—'Thy word'—referred to the whole Bible; or, again, to cite Job xix. 25 as if the words 'my Redeemer'—wrongfully retained in the Revised Version, where the marginal 'vindicator' is the only accurate rendering—referred to Christ.

All such misrepresentations may seem on the surface to be harmless, or even effective. But in the end they can only bring disaster, simply because they are not true; and the present age demands, above all else, that doctrine must be true to the uttermost. Therein they are quite justified by the whole genius of Christianity. Whether, therefore, in the Old Testament or the New, but more

especially as to the Old, the first duty of every reader who wishes to understand, and of every teacher who desires to make known the truth, is to acquaint himself with the actual circumstances of a narrative, or the true reference of a statement, or the genuine intention of a speaker. Upon these alone, whether for public announcement or for private comfort and inspiration, can any doctrine be based, which is to arrest the attention and impress the minds of modern men and women.

But the matter, unfortunately, cannot end here. As it is the first duty of every lecturer or author to be honest, so must it be acknowledged that the modern situation as regards the appreciation of the Bible is definitely complicated. There are in it at least four elements—certainties, uncertainties, reasons for fear, and grounds for hope. A brief summary of these is all that can now be attempted.

(1) The certainties are plain and manifold. It is as certain as facts and human nature can make it, that the war between the Traditional and Critical estimates of the Bible will continue long after the present European conflict is ended. The Traditionalists will be as determined, as implacable, as persistent, as the Germans; and the Critics, of all schools, will be as firm, as earnest, and as confident of final victory, as are the Allies. It is in some respects a pity that there should be such war; but, happily, much more may be said on behalf of this conflict than for the miserable curse which has so frightfully afflicted all Europe. If we leave the expression of that for other occasions, it remains certain that the views enunciated by Drs. C. A.

Dixon, James Orr, W. H. Griffith Thomas, and others in this country, and a number of believers in America—who have been lavishly represented in *The Fundamentals*, sent all over the world by two wealthy laymen—will long be perpetuated. Thus the first-named above, speaking for the rest, says :—

> We verily believe that the destructive Higher Criticism movement has been weighed in the balances and found wanting. It has raised many questions, and established little or nothing. Its assured results have been proved to be for the most part myths, if not moths. In the meantime the pulpit has in many places been smitten with a paralysis of unbelief, and the churches have withered under its influence. But there are signs that the tide is turning, and that the trend of those who dare to do their own thinking is back to the Bible as the authoritative word of God.[1]

That both the statements and the assumptions here are false, every honest student knows. But it may suffice to test the validity of the principles represented if we simply turn over one page and examine the opening sentence of this protesting volume. What do we find?

> Every verse except two or three in the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm, the longest chapter in the Bible, refers to the Scriptures as 'Thy word,' 'Thy law,' 'Thy statutes,' 'Thy precepts,' and in this verse as 'Thy commandment.' 'Thy commandment is exceeding broad.' It is broad enough to include everything except falsehood.

[1] *Back to the Bible*, p. 15.

And yet this writer, whose intelligence and honesty we assume, does not see that this his opening and emphatic statement is—absolutely false. It is utterly untrue that any, or all, of the phrases he so quotes ' refers to the Scriptures,' i.e. to the Bible. Indeed, a falser statement could not be made, seeing that the Bible about which this book is written includes both Old and New Testaments, and neither of these was known as such when the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm was written. Thus to go on and say—

> The Word of God is described as pure, powerful, permanent, but its characteristic in verse 96 is its great breadth,

meaning by ' the Word of God ' the Bible, is manifestly and utterly false, for the Bible is not referred to at all. It is an instance, only too typical, of doing evil that good may come. Such an attitude may be well-meant and persistent, but it is wofully misleading and hopelessly self-condemned.

On the other hand, these further certainties enter irresistibly into the question of modern Christian reality in reference to the Bible.

(i.) The Bible is not read as it used to be, either as to quantity or quality. The paradox is perfectly true that ' the Bible is less read and more studied than ever before.' Even in the churches, regular Bible-readers are comparatively few. Outside the churches, it is not read at all. (ii.) It cannot be read as our fathers read it, unless all intelligence and honesty and moral perception are set aside. For the people no less than for scholars, educational influences since 1870 have made for ever impossible

contentment with former estimates and beliefs. (iii.) It ought not to be read as they did; for it is no part of true religion to ignore the increase of knowledge, and 'whatsoever things are true' must ever come into real Christian account. (iv.) Even if we wish to prevent further scrutiny, we cannot. Criticism can neither be dismissed nor evaded. Be the consequences what they may, Biblical history and criticism are as sure to remain and develop, as any branch of physical science. (v.) For genuine Christianity, all fear of Biblical criticism is unwarranted. Whatever lessons it compels us to learn, or past notions to unlearn, it is the friend, not foe, of real Christian faith. So that all harsh reviling of it becomes more and more plainly anti-Christian. (vi.) There is but one way of meeting the modern situation, and at the same time upholding the value and authority of the Bible, and that is the way of honest understanding. As Mr. Snell has truly said:—

> Let the truth be told. There is nothing to hide. Pious evasion of the truth has landed us in the deplorable position which is being widely recognized, that the tendency of men is away from our churches because they think that there counsel has been darkened, and because they affirm that there they are not sure of hearing the truth honestly uttered.[1]

(2) By the side of the certainty that the Bible must be viewed in modern light if it is to retain any influence at all with the rising generation, there are,

[1] *The Value of the Old Testament*, p. 16.

unfortunately, some uncertainties which becloud the future. Conservatism is always difficult to move, most of all religious conservatism. There are some good reasons for an attitude of hesitation in accepting new views, and there can scarcely be too much caution in avoiding 'cunningly devised fables' of every sort. But the wisely conservative attitude has an unhappy way of degenerating too easily into real obscurantism, which is unwilling to be taught, refuses to face facts, and lamentably illustrates the old adage that 'none are so blind as those who won't see.' How far the conflicts and complications which will shortly arise when the reaction sets in after the present all-engrossing War, will drive men to reality, cannot be predicted. But this very uncertainty makes it all the more necessary that the Christian Church, in all its branches, should appreciate the situation and act upon it, as Dr. Peake has so well outlined in his excellent volume hereupon.

The Bible has irretrievably lost the place once accorded to it by the consent of Christendom, and this is coming to be realized by an ever-increasing number. Not criticism alone, or even chiefly, has been responsible for the change. Combined advance from several sides has made the old position untenable. It is a momentous change, and might easily prove tragic. The retribution for extravagant claims is apt to be the repudiation of all claims whatever. It is the writer's conviction that while a position injudiciously selected can be no longer held, the defenders of the Bible have been driven to ground from which they will not easily be dislodged. If some claims made for it cannot

be sustained, other claims, and those the most vital, may be substantiated.[1]

(3) There are grave reasons for two kinds of fear in the near future. One is that, in spite of all such scholarly and conscientious effort, on truthful lines, as is illustrated in the book just mentioned, vast numbers in the churches, especially in the Evangelical and Free Churches, will obstinately refuse even to face the facts which demand a new and better understanding of the Bible. They will ensconce themselves behind time-honoured phrases both in the Bible and concerning it, and remain practically unmoved and immovable as to what Christian faith now involves and needs in this respect, or what modern knowledge demands. The other fear is that even amongst those who are disposed to be teachable, as well as great numbers to whom the whole matter is of as little moment as the disputes of the Jews were to Gallio, the Bible will be crowded out of thought in the rush of commercial, social, and political discussions which must come on as a flood, during the years which follow on war's fearful devastation.

(4) Nevertheless, there are also good grounds for hope, in spite of all fears. When by sober and judicious criticism the Bible is saved from its friends, its enemies can do it no harm. The stock-in-trade, indeed, of its most popular and vehement abusers will be gone. It is not by any means merely a case of criticism. It is the better understanding of the Bible in general, which has made it no exaggeration to say that in its light there are

[1] *The Bible, Its Origin and Significance*, p. vii.

no longer any 'Bible difficulties,' such as used to perplex sincere believers, and give virulent unbelievers their opportunity for reviling.[1]

It were, of course, vain to hope that such a better understanding, being at once true to history, to fact, to the plain utterances of the various 'books' about themselves, and to the progressive revelation which makes the New Testament so definitely distinct from the Old, will come to pass soon or easily. But it is coming; and all the well-meant but misplaced zeal of Leagues, Unions, Conventions, and the like will not prevent its growth. It will be increasingly useless to heap upon the Bible fine-sounding epithets, and then seek by vehement phrases to prevent its being naturally and frankly scrutinized. Even as now it is quite in vain to appeal, on the old lines, to the Bible as 'the Word of God' for modern minds.

But there is a threefold hope that the truer and better appreciation of the Bible, which makes it to be veritably the Word of God for this and the coming ages, will surely, even if slowly, prevail. It may reasonably be expected that there will be from Christian pulpits a more frank and faithful teaching, undeterred by the insinuations or accusations which such instructed honesty at present too often occasions. There is also growing, especially

[1] A recent popular instance of this is in Mr. R. Blatchford's book entitled *God and My Neighbour*—in which he urges that it would be for the good of humanity that the first fourteen books in the Bible should be burnt. But there is a 'more excellent way' than burning, viz. understanding—as he might well say if it were suggested that his works on Socialism should be destroyed. A right understanding of the Bible puts all such bitter onslaughts on the Old Testament entirely out of court.

amongst the younger adherents of the churches, a hunger for the truth, in this as in other matters, and a more marked disposition to accept and appreciate it. Happily, also, the influence of the modern press is on the side of progress, and all the questions which are inevitably associated with growth in the knowledge of the truth, are being answered in lucid publications which come well within the reach of every one who sincerely desires to learn. This section of our estimate of Christian reality, therefore, cannot close in any better fashion than by utilizing the opportunity to endorse the well-weighed words of a preceding Fernley Lecturer who has said :—

> The great aim and purpose of the Bible is to lead me to God. If it does not do that for me, it matters nothing, and less than nothing, that I believe every syllable of it to be infallibly true. If it does bring me to God, equally little does it matter what opinion I hold concerning touching the outward fashion of it; it has accomplished the great purpose for which God put it into my hands.[1]

There is, however, vast room that all modern believers should heed the warning of another teacher to whom Christendom owes much—for the best volume on theology now extant. Says Dr. W. N. Clarke :—

> The Bible is a means, not an end; a help to faith, not an object of faith. God must be foundation as well as object. It is the one thing needful,

[1] *Studies in the Old Testament*, by George Jackson, p. 238.

not that we keep our Bible, but that we keep our God. We must know Him as in Christ He is, must know no other. If you say to me, 'This I must believe and this reject, lest I lose my Bible,' I say to you in answer, 'This I must believe and this reject, lest I lose my God.'[1]

Bearing that well in mind, we may thank Him whom, through Christ, the Bible reveals to us, that in a sense the writer of the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm never intended or could know, and with an emphasis and comprehensiveness beyond his widest vision, we can say :—

> Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

And even as the diamond in a sunbeam flashes out radiance and beauty which would never otherwise have been seen, so do all the great utterances of Psalmists, Prophets, Seers of old, when they are put into 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.' In that light, and that alone, can the Bible be for coming generations 'the Word of God.'

[1] *The Scriptures in Theology*, p. 169.

APPENDIX TO SECTION IV

FROM the language employed and attitude adopted both in the press and pulpit by not a few Christian teachers, especially amongst the churches known as Evangelical, the impression is easily conveyed to the bulk of ordinary believers that the Bible is not only being 'attacked' by a band of critical extremists, but by many others in the churches who are lacking in genuine scholarship and true spirituality of mind. In one recent periodical alone issued by this school, readers are told that all criticism means 'the abandonment of the Bible, which really is the abandonment of God.' They are exhorted to 'take their stand for the defence of God's word.' It is said that 'belief in the reliability of the Bible has declined in Methodism,' and 'Methodism is lost, because she loses her faith in the Bible.' 'Poor soul, when he turns to the Higher Critics, he finds himself in the midst of a babble of discordant voices where there is not a single note of assured certainty.' 'Do not countenance the ministry of those who asperse the Bible.' 'The opinions of oft-mistaken men confessedly engaged in palming a falsehood upon the world.' This kind of talk is only too typical of much more. By way, therefore, of showing how recklessly false it all is, and exhibiting the real consensus of careful judgement which exists between well-known scholars whose character and scholarship are alike beyond question, the following brief extracts from some of their works are appended. Very many more might easily be adduced. So that whatever scorn may be cast by obscurantism on the uttered convictions of any one man, the suggestion that their total witness is wholly false and ruinous to Christian faith is more than the incurring of a grave responsibility. If it is not wilful ignorance, it is an intolerable presumption.

From Dr. Driver's *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, p. xix. :—

> Criticism in the hands of Christian scholars does not banish or destroy the inspiration of the Old Testament; it presupposes

it; it seeks only to determine the conditions under which it operates, and the literary forms through which it manifests itself; and it thus helps us to frame truer conceptions of the methods which it has pleased God to employ in revealing Himself to His ancient people of Israel, and in preparing the way for the fuller manifestation of Himself in Christ Jesus.

Dr. Westcott's *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels* is well known. He says:—

The purely organic theory of Inspiration rests on no Scripture authority, and, if we except a few ambiguous metaphors, is supported by no historical testimony. It is at variance with the whole form and fashion of the Bible, and is destructive of all that is holiest in man, and highest in religion, which seeks the co-ordinate elevation of all our faculties and not the destruction of any one of them.

The Biblical critic approaches the Scriptures from their literary side, by the same methods as he would approach any other ancient writings, if with more scrupulous care, and a more present sense of his responsibility. It is when the books of the Bible are studied as other books, that their unique character is proved beyond controversy.

The Bible, Its Meaning and Supremacy, by the late Dean Farrar, is a book far too little known, most valuable for its equal lucidity and honesty.

To me, then, the Scriptures, not in every line and word of them, but in their total and final revelation, are and ever will be Holy Scriptures, Sacred Writings, Sacred Books, the Divine Word, the Scriptures of God. But because they are and ever will be thus to me, and because they themselves have taught me the indefeasible majesty of truth, I should shudder to maintain for them the false claims which they never make for themselves as a whole, but which have been foisted upon them by ignorance and superstition, to the immense diminution of their sacred authority, and to the deep injury of the Church of mankind (p. 22).

It cannot be too distinctly understood that we are free to judge, from the standpoint of Christianity, every page and every verse of the Old Testament which falls below the rule which Christ set forth. If dark deeds are ascribed to God's command, we who know that He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, can only suppose that to the defective knowledge of them of old time those deeds appeared to be in accordance with His will. Nothing can be regarded by us as the message of God which the Spirit of God or the Son has taught us to reject and condemn (p. 58).

Is it not, then, clear that we must inquire into the structure and peculiarity of the Sacred Books? that we should be acting with craven unbelief if we refrained from doing so? Those inquiries have convinced every profound critic and theologian of any eminence, that some of the books of Scripture are an amalgam of two or three books, and that other books have been compiled from various sources, and edited and re-edited by later hands. There is nothing whatever in such conclusions to shake even the outermost fringe of the hem of our religious faith; for the Scripture notion of revelation is a union of three elements—faith in the world of phenomena; God-given ideas in the world of thought; and a verifying faculty bestowed on the divinely touched soul.

I know that it will not be easy for some readers to abandon their former views on these subjects. Let them, however, be watchful against the subtle arrogance which may, as a result of the immobility of their own convictions, tempt them to bring railing accusations against their brethren. Let them take to heart the warning of Scripture, that a sluggard may be wiser in his own conceit, than seven men who can render a reason. 'O merciful God,' exclaims Hooker, 'what man's wit is there able to sound the depths of those dangerous and fearful evils whereinto our weak and impotent nature is inclinable to sink itself, rather than to show an acknowledgement of error in that which we have unadvisedly taken upon us to defend, against the stream as it were of a contrary public resolution?' (pp. 126, 130).

Elsewhere, in his *History of Interpretation* (p. 369), the same scholar says:—

Whoever was the first dogmatist to make the terms 'the Bible' and 'the Word of God' synonymous, rendered to the cause of truth and of religion an immense disservice. The phrase in that sense has no shadow of scriptural authority. It occurs from three to four hundred times in the Old Testament and about a hundred times in the New, and in *not one of all those instances* is it applied to the Scriptures. The formula of the Reformation in its best days, like that of the Church of England, was not, 'Scripture is the word of God,' but, 'Scripture contains the word of God.'

'The Bible and the Bible only,' say some among us, 'is the religion of Methodists.' It is, of course, intended for an echo of Chillingworth's phrase as to Protestants. But it is only right that his other words should be equally heeded and reiterated.

Take away this presumptuous imposing of the senses of men on the word of God, of the special senses of men on the general words of God, and laying them on men's conscience together,

under the equal penalty of death and damnation. This deifying our own interpretations and tyrannous enforcing them upon others; this restraining of the word of God from that latitude and generality and understanding of men, from that liberty wherein Christ and the Apostles left them, is and hath been the only fountain of all the schism in the Church. Take away this persecuting, burning, cursing, damning of men for not subscribing to the words of men as the words of God; require of Christians only to believe in Christ, and to call no man Master but Him only.

Again, a valuable work for every sincere student, is *The Bible, its Origin and Nature*, by the late Dr. Marcus Dods. It is clear and unanswerable. We now note the following:—

Criticism is not a hostile force hovering round the march of the Christian Church, picking off all loosely attached followers and galling the main body; it is rather the highly trained corps of scouts and skirmishers thrown out on all sides to ascertain in what direction it is safe and possible for the Church to advance.

The supposed result—of verbal inspiration—is a Bible in which every word is as truly the word of God as if He spoke it directly to ourselves, apart from all human intervention. There cannot be the faintest infusion of error. Every historical, scientific, or chronological statement is exactly true. It is needless to follow this theory into all its difficulties and inconsistencies. It makes demands that cannot be satisfied. It requires that we have a Bible of which we are sure that each book is divinely inspired in this absolutely inerrant sense; that no book has been admitted which is not thus authorized. It demands also that we have a solution for all discrepancies in the several books. If such a Bible was necessary, then steps would have been taken to secure it to us. But in point of fact we have a Bible which we know does not in every particular tally with that which was at first received. Manuscripts have been corrupted, translations are inexact; but it is with these that Christian people have practically to do. So that the result of this theory of infallibility is not after all to put in our hands an infallible Bible, but actually to rob us of it (p. 111).

To attempt to bar out criticism by affirming inspiration, is a futile enterprise. The day for that is past. You cannot now do it. Men will inquire for themselves and will test the accuracy of the Gospels because they are resolved to know the truth; for let us make no mistake, the freest inquiry is the only possible path to sound conviction. God's world is a world of progress, the tide is now flowing, and he who stiffly clings to his old moorings will inevitably be swamped. We must obey God's call, and without fear let truth carry us where it leads (p. 173).

Dr. W. N. Clarke issued two volumes on this great theme, both of them worthy of utmost regard. The one, *Sixty Years with the Bible*, must be taken as a whole to do it justice. But these sentences are most significant :—

> Thus by all my studies I was pledged to this new form of study which they called the Higher Criticism. How it has been misunderstood! Well I remember the solemnity with which a minister said in my hearing, 'The Higher Criticism is not higher morally.' No one ever said that it was. But it is legitimate morally, and necessary to the understanding of the Bible.
>
> Late in the 'eighties I read the statement that the Higher Criticism had already relieved us of more than half of the moral difficulties of the Old Testament. I thought it true, and have never doubted it. Indeed, more is true. The Higher Criticism removes the cause of the deepest of those moral difficulties, for it shows us that Christians need not attribute to the God of Christ all the acts and passions that Israelites attributed to the God of Israel, or approve the moral judgements that were recorded in days of inferior light. . . . Particularly in one respect has the Higher Criticism deserved well of me. By the revolution that it has wrought in my conception of the Old Testament, it has largely unified and christianized my Bible (p. 174).
>
> With what delight and satisfaction, then, did I welcome the message of the Higher Criticism! I was now led to see that the central thing in the religion of the Old Testament was not the law, but the prophets, and their teaching (p. 188).
>
> I commend this experience of mine to the many Christians who have been led to suppose that the Higher Criticism can be nothing else than a weapon of unbelief. For me it has made the Bible to be far more consistently a Christian book than it had ever been before, and has placed it in my hands more ready for all Christian use. In the restful attitude concerning the Bible which I now hold, I thankfully recognize the Higher Criticism as one of the most valuable of helps (p. 192).

In his other volume, *The Use of the Scriptures in Theology*, the same writer, whose well-known *Outline of Christian Theology* is a treasure to every student, also says :—

> The preciousness of sacred things may easily induce us to hold fast what intelligence requires us to surrender or to change. This sore temptation is upon theology to-day in its relation to the Scriptures. The time has come for frank discussion of the problem, for open acknowledgement that the old position is untenable, and for unreserved inquiry for a better method (p 45).

So more and more the Scriptures are being examined and used in the light of what they are actually found to be, not in view of the manner in which they were composed. Not as documents classed beforehand as unlike all others are they coming to offer themselves to theology, but as documents to be used like others where they are found like others, and as unlike where they are found unlike. . . . The need of the ministry and the Sunday school is the need of all the people also. For want of distinguishing the Christian element from everything else that the Bible contains, the Christian people are suffering far more than they know, and with them is suffering the name and power of popular Christianity. There is a vast amount of honest Christian faith practically founded on the Bible, when it ought to be founded directly on God. 'But what,' it may be said, 'do we know of God except through the Bible?' Yes, and what do we know of the star except by the help of the telescope? And yet the telescope is not the star (pp. 153, 167).

Dr. C. A. Briggs' work, *The Bible, the Church, and the Reason*, published more than twenty years ago in America, is unfortunately little known in this country; but it contains by anticipation a complete answer to many things still asserted in our midst, and merits careful study. No better statement of general principles than the following can be desired:—

Biblical criticism is only one department of criticism. Every branch of human knowledge or pursuit has its own branch of criticism; for criticism searches all things. But the general aims, principles, and methods are the same. Some possibly may think that the Bible should be exempt from criticism because it is the word of God, the foundation of our faith and hopes of eternal life. But a little reflection shows that this is impossible. It is necessary for us to know whether the Bible is indeed the word of God, and whether we can safely build our faith and life upon it. You may be willing to take it on the authority of your pastor, or your parents, or your friends, or the Christian Church. But there are multitudes who cannot do this. They want to know by what authority the Church claims that the Bible is the word of God. The Church has committed so many sins against truth and fact, that it is necessary for us to know whether the Church is in error about the Bible also, or whether it is right. How can we know this except by criticism? (p. 128).

As to the differences between critics which are so often enlarged upon—'a babble of discordant voices where there is not a single note of assured certainty'—the same genuine scholar says (*Presbyterian Review*, April, 1887):—

There are no Hebrew Professors on the Continent, so far as I know, who would deny the literary analysis of the Pentateuch into the four great documents. The Professors of Hebrew in the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, and tutors in a large number of theological colleges, hold to the same opinion. A very considerable number of the Hebrew Professors of America are in accord with them. There are, indeed, a few professional scholars who hold to the traditional opinion, but they are in a hopeless minority. I doubt whether there is any question of scholarship whatever, in which there is a greater agreement, than amongst scholars in this question of the literary analysis of the Hexateuch.

No student of to-day will deny Dr. Sanday's right to respectful hearing. In his most valuable Bampton Lectures on *Inspiration*, he says :—

In speaking of critical theories of the Old Testament, the layman may wish to be reminded what the crucial points in these are. Two may be described as general, and two as particular. The general are (i.) the untrustworthy character of Jewish traditions as to authorship, unless confirmed by internal evidence ; (ii.) the composite character of very many of the books. Two particular conclusions are of special importance. (i.) The presence in the Pentateuch of a considerable element which in its present shape is held by many to be not earlier than the Captivity. (ii.) The composition of the book of Deuteronomy not long, or at least not very long, before its promulgation by King Josiah in the year 621 B.C., which thus becomes a pivot-date in the history of Jewish literature. To these positions thus broadly stated, I must, so far as my present judgement goes, confess my own adhesion. But the working out of them has not deprived the Old Testament of any of its value. On the contrary, stumbling-blocks have been removed ; a far more vivid and more real apprehension of the Old Testament, both as history and religion, has been obtained ; and, as I also hope to be able to show, the old conviction that we have in it a revelation from God to men is not only unimpaired, but placed upon firmer foundations (p. 121).

A little volume easily accessible to the humblest reader, but of greatest value, is that by the late Bishop of Ripon (Dr. Boyd Carpenter) which forms the opening volume to the Temple Bible, *An Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures*. A fair study of this little work alone should suffice to allay the fears, and correct the mistakes, of all those who tremble to think that the Bible is being ' pulled to pieces ' by the critics.

The real question, therefore, is not whether criticism is to be allowed or not, for all use it; but whether criticism is to follow an orderly and scientific method, or to follow the vagaries of individual prejudice or caprice. Is it not better, in other words, to read the Old Testament with an open mind, to remember that it is a composite work disclosing to us the successive stages of religious, social, and moral progress of a remarkable people, and that its chiefest value is not in giving laws which bind us who have received the law of Christ, but in enabling us to see that God never left Himself without witness, and that He trained and educated Israel through various stages of religious growth? (p. 29).

We have seen that, notwithstanding theories to the contrary, Christian people have exercised their critical judgement upon portions of the Old Testament, that the action and attitude of our Lord justified their doing so, that the very principles which He laid down not only sanctioned but rendered necessary such criticism, while by the application of it the true spiritual value of the Old Testament is not really altered or impaired (p. 34).

The effect of the criticism which has undermined previously accepted views has been to correct a great deal of once common literalism of interpretation; the knowledge which comes to us comes to deliver us from notions which were in danger of becoming too mechanical; the interpretations put into our hands are wider in range and more ethical in scope; everything is preaching to us that we need to become more spiritually-minded, if we are to understand the ways and the teaching of God. In times like our own, when men afraid of trusting the living God are seeking to base their faith upon gross materialistic notions, is it not well that the disintegration of crude ideas which criticism accomplishes should bring us back to those words of our Lord which, though constantly ignored, are yet as constantly needed by the Church, 'The hour cometh when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth'? (p. 151).

Another helpful work from a competent scholar, is Bishop Ryle's *Holy Scripture and Criticism*. A fair study of it should suffice to answer all the unwarranted though well-intended aspersions of some Christian believers and teachers. Says Dr. Ryle:—

Christian criticism has taken a different line. It frankly teaches the possibility of imperfections of treatment arising from the limitations of knowledge in a human writer, and from old-world methods of composition of which we now have indubitable proofs. The Old Testament conception of the

universe, or astronomy, geology, and other regions of human science, reflects the common beliefs of the age and country; it claims no supernatural anticipation of knowledge. . . . The ordinary reader likes to regard everything as literal fact, and he is quite at liberty to do so. But he has no right to denounce, or reproach for faithlessness to Christianity, his brother who considers that the general evidence is in favour of the story of Jonah being allegorical, that of Esther being an unhistorical patriotic tale, that of Job a dramatic poem. Christianity is not injured by this liberty of interpretation. It is relieved from a great reproach by the charity of a larger freedom in the work of teaching (pp. 35, 36).

I speak as one who for a quarter of a century has worked at Biblical study upon the lines of the so-called Higher Criticism, and I will not for one moment admit that the old methods of free inquiry, which are the honour of our Reformation period, have in any sense lost their virtue (p. 132).

I am sure, with the conviction of many years' experience, that the teaching of the Old Testament upon such lines infuses fresh life and interest into the study of the sacred books. We may deplore the loss of old traditions as to the origin and structure of the books; we may be staggered at realizing how plain and unvarnished is the rough human element of their composition, which criticism has exposed to view. But we may rest assured that moral courage will not be unrewarded, in the endeavour to make clear the lessons of Biblical criticism (p. 41).

It is not criticism, nor liberalism of thought, that constitutes any real peril to the influence of the Bible over the thought of the coming age. It is not superstition, nor priestcraft, that will form any lasting obstacle to its dissemination over the globe, to its hold over the peoples of the world. It is rather the indolence which, in the hurry of modern life, will save itself the trouble of reading and studying Holy Scripture, it is the indifference to the things of God, to the very thought of God, which will resign the use of the sword into the keeping of the priest, which will seize upon any pretext of hearsay objections or half-understood arguments (p. 136).

The whole of this volume might be filled with testimonies similar to the foregoing. But as that would be impracticable, only a few more shall here be quoted, and references given to others which any sincere student may verify for himself.

But Dr. Peake's recent work upon *The Bible, Its Origin, Significance, and Abiding Worth* is so valuable in its scholarly frankness, as to call for distinct mention. The erudite author says, in regard to the present situation :—

I believe that the policy of silence is impracticable; and even if it were not so, it is neither safe nor wise. I regard it as

one of our most urgent tasks to arm our young people against unbelief. I further believe that no surer means can be found to win their confidence in us, than to give them practical assurances that we really know the difficulties ourselves, and have felt them as such, but still in spite of them retain our faith. The time has gone by for keeping faith in a sickly hot-house; the glass is crashing all about us, and God has let loose upon us the keen and searching winds of hostile criticism. It is to the end that faith may be no longer merely a delicate and beautiful flower, but tough and sinewy, deep-rooted, and unbending to the fiercest winds that blow (p. 26).

Christians see in the religion of Israel a divinely ordered preparation for Christianity. But if we have in the Old Testament a progressive revelation leading up to Christ, we need to place its documents in the true order, if we are to understand the course which the development took. But if the Bible is to be studied historically, criticism is indispensable. The history is enshrined in documents, and these documents must be analysed and dated, that we may fit each into its proper place in the onward march of God's self-revelation. It is criticism alone that can answer questions as to time and place, circumstances of origin, or the composite authorship of the documents. . . . It has pleased God to give us the Bible in such a form as to make criticism of it essential, if we are truly to understand it, in all its fullness and depth of meaning. It is a perpetual challenge to all the qualities of mind and heart, rewarding those most richly who lavish the most loving study upon it, and count no tedious toil too arduous, that they may more truly understand by what way God has given it to us (p. 109).

Lastly, it must not be forgotten that those who stand out as the most prominent defenders of tradition have made very serious concessions to criticism, and those who imagine that their works rehabilitate tradition would probably be surprised to see how different from the rigidly traditional is the attitude they have been forced to adopt. These concessions have been wrung from them against all their prepossessions, by the sheer pressure of the evidence. In the judgement of the vast majority of Old Testament scholars, they are far below the minimum of what will ultimately have to be accepted (p. 181).

The definite words of Professor W. J. Moulton, in the thirty-ninth Fernley Lecture, on *The Witness of Israel*, corroborate this attitude.

Historical criticism has proved with overwhelming force that some of the older views as to the way in which the sacred books were written were altogether defective. It has taken away the picture of the nation of Israel starting on its career endowed by Moses with a completely developed system of laws adequate

for all the needs of the future. Instead of that, it has shown that, like the laws of other peoples, the laws of Israel grew with the life of the nation, and were supplied to meet each successive demand as it arose. Corresponding to the three main codes of law which it discovers in the Pentateuch, it is able to point to the three periods of history during which these codes were active. . . . In their broad outlines the results of modern criticism have secured the allegiance of nearly all the scholars of all the Protestant churches, and seem to be impregnable. The task of the future will be much more to interpret than disprove these results (pp. xi., xviii.).

Dr. Monro Gibson's volume on *The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture*, published under the auspices of the Free Church Council, will be found an admirable introduction to the whole subject for ordinary readers. He has truly expressed the general situation, and added his own testimony.

There are, no doubt, those now as always, who love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil; but there are multitudes of good earnest souls who do love the light, but have been forced into unbelief by the cruel demand that they must accept every word of the Bible as coming direct from God, or reject the whole. They are too conscientious to say that they can accept every word; so the only alternative left to them is to be done with it altogether.

It was in this way—the critical views of the Old Testament—that I came out of the comparative darkness into better light; and it is in the hope that I may help some others into the clear and unclouded conviction of the inspiration and authority of the Sacred Scriptures, that I try in this book to show the immense gains which have come from the frank recognition of all the facts before us—from basing on these our theory of inspiration, instead of first settling our theory and then trying to force the facts to fit it (pp. 9, 201).

For some years the cultured work by Dr. George Adam Smith, *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, has been before the religious world, and is on all hands duly appreciated. He speaks with the authority of unchallenged scholarship and Christian character. But his book must be studied as a whole to do it justice.

In short, the New Testament treatment of the Old not only bequeaths to the Church the liberty of criticism, but along many lines the need and obligation of criticism; not only delivers us, once for all, from bondage to the doctrine of the literal inspiration and equal divinity of all parts of the Old

Testament, but prompts every line of research and discussion along which the modern criticism of the Old Testament has been conducted.

To take one example, criticism has cleared the old age of David from a serious blot in his treatment of Shimei—'Thou shalt bring his hoar head down to the grave with blood.' These are horrible words to be the last of such a life; horrible words, clothing a horrible spirit. But this is just one of the passages in David's biography which, upon linguistic and other grounds, criticism has taught us to doubt. It is a late passage; it betrays the temper as well as the dialect of a legal school in Israel which enforced the extermination of the enemies of the pious. We have much reason, therefore, to let it go, and, letting it go, we remove from the most interesting of Old Testament stories of character, a termination which saddens every charm and blights every promise revealed by its previous progress.

I think it can be shown that criticism, so far from throwing doubt upon either the uniqueness of Israel's true knowledge of God, or upon the personal influence of God as producing this, certainly proves the former, and leaves us with the latter as its most natural and scientific explanation. Or, to put this otherwise, the most advanced modern criticism provides grounds for the proof of a Divine revelation in the Old Testament, at least more firm than those on which the older apologetic used to rely (pp. 22, 80, 115).

One might well say that the above testimonies ought to be more than sufficient to show the mischievous unwarrantableness of the strong assertions and appeals which are yet made to ordinary believers, by some who claim special knowledge and zeal. In order, however, to make this protest against such misleading propagandism as emphatic as possible, a further list is here definitely given of other writers, of the same calibre in mind and heart as the foregoing, whose words are equally weighty, clear, and forceful, to the same effect. Limitations of space alone prevent their being printed here as plainly as they all deserve. They admit at least of verification by every one who is as anxious to be guided into the truth as was the eunuch to whom the Spirit sent Philip, that he might 'understand' what he was reading.

Dr. Illingworth, *Personality, Divine and Human*, pp. 185–188 (Library Edition). This valuable work can also be obtained in cheap sixpenny form (Macmillan).

Essays on the Bible, by the late Dr. A. Momerie, characterized by the writer's well-known lucidity and plainness. All through, but especially pp. 62, 111.

Studies in the Old Testament, by the Rev. George Jackson. A valuable summary, as lucid as true throughout, but especially pp. 23, 27, 54, 103, 129.

Shall We Understand the Bible? by the Rev. Rhondda Williams. A most suggestive and helpful little work when fairly judged as a whole. See especially pp. 1, 20, 80, 85.

The New Appreciation of the Bible, a most valuable work from America, clear, forceful, and moderate—in fact, unanswerable and confirmative, by Dr. W. C. Selleck. See especially pp. 11, 13, 15, 93, 174, 217, 304, 306, covering the whole ground.

Biblical Criticism and Modern Thought; or, the Place of the Old Testament Documents in the Life of To-day, by Dr. W. G. Jordan, of Queen's University, Kingston, Canada. No better book can be put into the hands of the thoughtful reader. Beautifully printed, and published by Messrs. T. & T. Clark, it deserves to be much more widely known. Special pages meriting quotation are 23, 36, 37, 40, 118, 125, 140, 152, 201, 216, 234, 241.

The Early Traditions of Genesis, by Dr. A. R. Gordon, of the Presbyterian College, Montreal. A scholarly and valuable book. See pp. 20, 138, 163, 166, 228, 230.

Prehistoric Archaeology and the Old Testament, by Dr. H. J. Astley. A very thoughtful work on scientific lines, with special appendix, pp. 274–302, on the Higher Criticism and its justification.

Old Testament Criticism and the Christian Church, by J. E. McFadyen, of Knox College, Toronto. It is scarcely possible to select passages from this most careful and useful work. The whole merits most careful study. Its attitude may be put into a few of its words :—' The problems of the Old Testament were not created by the critics, but by the facts; they are felt not only by the professional scholar, but by every one who reads his Bible with ordinary care, and with an open mind. Criticism is only a means, to be everywhere—at least in Biblical scholarship—subordinated to a moral and religious end. Its aim is constructive; the need for it is imperative; the result of it is to make many a rough place plain, and to remove many a stumbling-block from the path of honest doubt ' (p. 361).

Contentio Veritatis—essays in constructive theology by six Oxford Tutors, of which one by the Rev. C. F. Burney, St. John's, is on ' The Permanent Religious Value of the Old Testament,' see pp. 178, 179.

The Origin and Character of the Bible, by J. T. Sunderland, M.A., pp. ix., 282, 287, 303.

Evolution and the Holy Scriptures, by Dr. J. M. Wilson, one of the finest scholars and noblest characters in the Anglican Church. This is a sixpenny brochure issued by the S.P.C.K., but worth many times its cost. The pp. 60, 67, 68 are specially noteworthy, but the whole richly merits careful reading.

The works of Dr. C. F. Kent, of Yale, are well known, but no one of them is more valuable than his book on *The Origin and Permanent Value of the Old Testament*. It is scarcely possible to specify pages where the whole is so pertinent. The general attitude is thus summarized :—

> The Church is undoubtedly passing quietly through a revolution in its conception and attitude towards the Bible, more fundamental and far-reaching than that represented by its precursor the Protestant Reformation. But its real significance is becoming daily more apparent. . . . Not a grain of truth which the Bible contains has been destroyed or permanently obscured. Instead, the débris of time-honoured traditions and dogmas have been cleared away, and the true Scriptures at last stand forth again in their pristine splendour (p. 16).

The Value of the Old Testament, by the Rev. B. J. Snell, M.A., B.Sc., is a small volume with large print, but as lucid in sense as clear in type. Its unanswerable plea may be put into three sentences.

> Error and ignorance cannot be stirred until a man grasps the elementary truth that the Bible is a progressive literature, the story of the education of a race struggling upward through sin and ignorance into a purer air, the expression through many changing centuries of a nation's life and thought, the history of a great divine purpose moving on to its realization. These Scriptures are not a legal document to be construed as of equal cogency throughout; they are the literary monument of a people's growth in the understanding of religion. . . . Indeed, it is not too much to say that just as the principle of evolution has made natural history intelligible, so the Higher Criticism is making the history and literature of the Hebrew people intelligible (pp. 14, 27).

It has recently become the custom, on the part of those who wish to throw discredit on the Higher Criticism, to refer to the opinions of Wiener and Dahse amongst others. In view of such

attempts, reference may here well be made to the careful volume just published (1914) by the Rev. D. C. Simpson, M.A., of Manchester College, Oxford, entitled *Pentateuchal Criticism*. It deserves the commendation with which Bishop Ryle introduces it, and may be commended to every student. Here only the conclusion can be given.

> These, then, are the reasons why it was said above that the attempt to overthrow Higher Criticism by 'textual' criticism is not merely doomed, but 'foredoomed,' to failure. It is foredoomed to failure because if all that is maintained by these textual critics could be proved, if even Schlogl's drastic elimination of the name Jehovah from Gen. ii. 4–Exod. iii. 12 were accepted in its entirety, the critical position would not in any essential point be weakened. The textual criticism of Wiener and Dahse takes account of only one out of a multitude of criteria—and that, as critics themselves are perfectly aware, ceasing all but entirely after Exod. vi. 2—but all the other criteria would, in the case supposed, retain their cogency unimpaired, and the critical position as a whole would remain unaffected. Some parts of the analysis of JE into J and E sources would no doubt be less certain than they are now, but others would be practically untouched. The separation of P from JE and its date would still remain. The distinct authority of Deuteronomy and its date would also remain. The verdict of Hebrew history would likewise remain. No vital point of the critical hypothesis would be affected at all; but the whole magnificent fabric, built as it is on an infinitely surer foundation than our opponents in the least realize, would stand firm to witness to the methods which it has pleased God to employ, to educate His people progressively into a higher and more complete knowledge of Himself (pp. 201, 202).

Yet another work calls for special mention here, because what the preceding book does for the student, this volume does for every reader of ordinary intelligence. *The Bible of To-day*, by the Rev. Alban Blakiston, M.A., published by the Cambridge University Press, is reverent enough and 'conservative' enough to satisfy the most devout. None the less, it speaks with plain truthfulness as to the present position of Bible study.

> We said when we began that of recent years a change has come over our study of the Bible, and that is true. To-day we find ourselves in a new and invigorating atmosphere. The historical method of study, by which we mean an honest attempt to discover precisely what the Scriptures originally said and meant, brings out every day new and unexpected

lines of thought, and other features of interest the value of which cannot be overestimated. It seems to stand to reason that the older methods of interpretation—the allegorical, which saw a mystical meaning in everything, or the literal, which gave every word an equal value—could not have been productive of such fruitful results. By the exercise of a certain ingenuity the unhistorical reader could always read his own ideas and preconceptions into the language of Scripture; but as means to discover what God had intended to teach, such methods were foredoomed to failure.

It needs to be said that the principle of authority is of the utmost importance to all really scientific work, and that it must be maintained. But the principle of authority is based upon God's gift of reason; and it is in the hands of those scholars whose exact studies and divinely illuminated researches have given them the responsibility of pronouncing a verdict. Such an authority does not curtail the privilege or the obligation of individual study, nor does it close the door to further scientific studies whose fruits others may sift and weigh. But it does emphasize the folly of those who would make themselves independent of all guidance, and who would claim a right to interpret the Bible as they please—a claim which often means, in conformity with their own prejudices (pp. 16, 20).

Finally, reference may be made to *The Christian View of the Old Testament*, by Frederick Carl Eiselen, of the Garrett Biblical Institute, as a comparatively small book, the whole of which entirely merits quotation. For reverence and moderation in tone, combined with lucidity in statement and reliability in conclusion, no better work can be recommended for ordinary readers. To take an average Bible-class carefully through this volume, would do them more good, and give them a truer appreciation of the Bible in modern light, than all the usual 'lessons' with customary 'reading round' and comments, for a whole year. It would be as enjoyable as convincing, and would abundantly confirm the testimony of Dr. Peake, which the author quotes.

> Speaking for myself, I may truthfully say that my sense of the value of Scripture, my interest in it, my attachment to it, have been almost indefinitely enhanced by the new attitude and new mode of study which criticism has brought to us.

In view of the above testimonies, and numberless others which might be quoted from equally worthy sources, it is indeed time that there was an end of the wild assertions and

unwarranted denunciations which still appear in certain books and magazines, under the guise of special if not exclusive truth and piety. It were only pitiful to quote them; they are all sufficiently summed up in Paul's estimate of those who in his day had 'a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.' It is worse than useless to reiterate that our fathers claimed such and such things for the Scriptures; or that the 'standards' of any church are what they have been. Our fathers were as fallible as they were sincere. And when any 'standards' of any Church are manifestly contrary to what is true, then the only religious and Christian as well as rational thing to do, is to amend them according to the fuller light which now beats upon them.

V

CHRISTIAN REALITY—THEOLOGICAL

Finally, the New Testament directly teaches the universal Fatherhood of God. The certainty and importance of this teaching must not be measured by the number of texts which can be cited as absolute evidence of it. It may almost be that the certainty of the doctrine is in inverse proportion to the number of mere proof texts of it; that the further we explore, the more we shall find the prevalence of a teaching as to God, Christ, believers, mankind, which would be deprived of all spiritual coherence and unreasonableness, unless the universal Fatherhood were at the base of it.

Such a restatement of the true doctrine is one of the great theological tasks set before the twentieth century; and with its accomplishment the Fatherhood of God will be set forth in worthier expression, and will be seen to be the relationship, above all others, which must determine all Christian thought that is true to the life and teaching of Christ, or that offers a guide to the purposes and dealings of God with mankind.—*The Fatherhood of God*, Dr. Scott Lidgett, pp. 32, 281.

The past history of man fails to reveal to scientists evidence of sudden degradation like that implied in the expression 'fall.' On the contrary, the general tendency has been upwards, though the path has by no means been straight; deviations have been numerous and mistakes frequent.—*Cambridge Theological Essays*, Dr. Duckworth, p. 173.

What, then, may be meant by the fall of man?

At a certain stage of development man became conscious of a difference between right and wrong, so that thereafter when his actions fell below a normal standard of conduct he felt ashamed and sinful. He thus lost his animal innocence and entered upon a long period of human effort and failure; nevertheless the consciousness of degradation marked a rise in the scale of existence.—*Substance of Faith Allied with Science*, Sir Oliver Lodge, p. 20.

V

CHRISTIAN REALITY—THEOLOGICAL

We have avowedly left the consideration of religion on the Continent of Europe, and in foreign fields, to other occasions. They are not, by any means, excluded from our thought. They cannot but be kept in view when we try to formulate, ever so briefly, those main elements of Christian belief which constitute it the truest, noblest, most efficient, and final religion of humanity. There can be little doubt, however, that if these great first principles of Christianity were realized in Britain, the influence of the ensuing results would be world-wide, and effective beyond measure. We will, therefore, continue to think of the modern presentation of Christian reality as it obtains in this country, and as the need will be, when we emerge out of the present hell of war into the dawn of a brighter day.

The main elements of religion will certainly then call for the utmost clearness, as well as emphasis, in their statement to an unsettled nation. Such a reconsideration of religion will necessarily involve, in very real sense, a revised theology. To insist that religion is distinct from theology, is to say no more than that the warm flesh of the living hand is distinct from the bony skeleton which forms the solid and potent framework. Each of the two elements is indispensable to the other. Any quarrel

between them is unthinkable. They are one in living co-operation. Even so is theology as necessary to religion, as religion is the natural exponent of theology. Christian reality, therefore, must ever be as theological as practical.

Amidst all other matters which will press for discussion when the great after-war crisis is upon us, there can be no doubt that men will be concerned indeed, probably as never before, to know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, theologically, in regard to seven all-pervading themes. God; Man; Jesus Christ; the Bible; Christian 'Holiness'; Sociology; Eschatology. These unmistakably constitute the subjects on which, if Christianity is to continue to exist, let alone develop, it must speak with no uncertain voice, to the virtually new world which will begin when the War ends. No reader with any degree of sense or sympathy will expect these to be here fully considered. But it may be none the less helpful, as the humble contribution of one mind, in the interests of sincerity and truth, to point out in each case what the Christian Gospel for the age really connotes, and should offer to modern mankind. When the Apostle Paul, in closing his letter to the Philippians, exclaimed, 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true,' he gave utterance to the master-tone of Christianity. Above all else, Christianity stands for what is true. 'When He comes, the Spirit of truth, He will guide you into all truth.' There has never been a time in the world's history when Christ's promise was so significant, so fraught with tremendous issues, as now. Nothing can be of such paramount

importance for generations to come, no less than for the men of to-day, as the truth in regard to each of the seven great themes mentioned above.

Of these, the Bible has been sufficiently considered in the preceding section. Sociology, Eschatology, and Christian Experience are of such vast import as to demand each a separate following discussion. It remains, therefore, here, to endeavour to state, as clearly as succinctness will permit, what present-day Christian reality means and maintains, in regard to God, to man, and to Jesus Christ.

I. God

The reasons for accepting Theism as the most true and worthy philosophy of the universe have been sufficiently stated in other works.[1] They may therefore be assumed. The matter in hand here is not to prove the truth of Christianity, or even substantiate its foundations, but to summarize what may and must be put before the modern world as its living temple of reality, even the faith and hope which rest on those foundations.

Christian Theism bids us believe in 'one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all,'[2] as represented by Jesus Christ. The double query at once confronts us as to what this faith really signifies, and whether the whole Christian Church, in all its branches, is so faithful to that

[1] See *Haeckel's Monism False, Theomonism True, The True God*, by the present writer (published by C. H. Kelly, London), besides the vast library of other books on Theism.

[2] Eph. iv. 6.

significance as to be likely to move and win our modern populations.

Two vast assertions lie at the heart of the Christian message, viz. the personality, and the goodness, of God. They have all along been the veriest commonplaces of Christianity. Familiarity has not seldom reduced them to mere shibboleths, devoid alike of reality and force. But these latter must be restored, if the Christian religion is to hold good. That is to say, these great verities must be viewed in the light of the twentieth century, not of the eighteenth, still less that of the fourth. The modern development of scientific knowledge has made it simply impossible for us to think of the universe, and therefore of God, as our fathers did. Each of the two main concepts concerning God, His personality and His goodness, has to be correlated with our latest knowledge, if it is to affect the generation which is even now being trained in that knowledge. To expect our children, and young people generally, to imbibe all modern science that is possible during the week, and then be content with ideas concerning God on Sunday which science has made irretrievably obsolete, is sheer fatuity.

It is not enough to assume a personal God. The age demands to know what we mean by ' personal,' and how the characteristics of a person, as understood by the average man, can, with any show of reason, be applied to God. It is equally true that worshipping congregations are not inclined to welcome metaphysics in the pulpit, and that they do in prayers and hymns alike take the main elements of personality—self-consciousness, intelligence, volition—for granted, in regard to God, quite

as fully as in speaking to each other. This is as it may be. But every one knows that in newspapers, magazines, booklets, in short everywhere, the words 'evolution' and 'immanence' are now heard, and accepted as conveying truth. Seeing, then, that the tide of modern education cannot be rolled back, there is nothing left for the Christian Church but to correlate its doctrine of God with what is—for sufficient reasons—now on all hands recognized as truth. So that if congregations sing to-day—

> The universal Lord
> By whose almighty word
> Creation rose in form complete,

it must be with a newer and truer understanding. For the old conception is simply untrue; and that is enough. Nor is it much better to say that—

> God is in heaven and men below,
> Be short our tunes, our words be few,
> A solemn reverence checks our songs,
> And praise sits silent on our tongues.

For the reverence which Christianity inculcates to the uttermost is not, for our modern vision, drawn from the remembrance of a far-off Deity in an infinitely distant heaven, but is rather represented when singing helps to realize :—

> O wondrous knowledge, deep and high,
> Where can a creature hide?
> Within Thy circling arms I lie,
> Beset on every side.

Though even this admits of intensification, when the doctrine of divine immanence is appreciated by the preacher, and made forceful for the people.

In a word, the God of bygone ages is neither great enough, nor near enough, for this age. The mind of man has been compelled to face an infinite universe, and so, if God may be addressed rationally in prayer, to face the overwhelming thought of an infinite personality. No doubt this is distressingly difficult intellectually, and their name is legion who, in the name of piety, will declare that they prefer a simpler Gospel. None the less is such simplicity one of the 'childish things' to be put away when manhood comes. The Christianity which, by its doctrine of God, is to influence the future, will have to wrestle with the greatness of God, and never separate the two nobly connected lines :—

> This awful God is ours,
> Our Father and our Friend.

Anything less than the awfulness of God is only mockery for the days that are upon us.

Yet it is probably true that for one ordinary man or woman to whom the personality or immanence of God brings difficulty, there are scores who are staggered in regard to His goodness. Every one who is the least acquainted with the literature of unbelief, whether academic or popular, knows that the theme upon which anti-Christian writers ceaselessly enlarge—sometimes with pathos, sometimes with bathos—is the mystery of pain. It is vain to deny that the difficulty which they so seek to make lurid is both real and great. Professor Peake has said, with equal candour and sympathy :—

> I am only one of many for whom the problem of pain constitutes the most powerful objection to a

Theism adequate to our deepest needs. I shall be more than content if by witness-bearing I help some souls to whom the world's misery is a nightmare, to escape beyond it into untroubled peace.[1]

In the midst of the fearful carnage which every day now reports, and even more when the excitement of war's horror is over and we have time to estimate the resultant misery, it cannot be matter for astonishment that to any sensitive mind it should be increasingly, overwhelmingly hard, to accept the goodness of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. There is no greater task for the Christian Church than to save men from that 'loss of belief in divine providence,' of which Strauss spoke so pathetically in his last work. The 'sense of abandonment,' which he declared to be 'something awful,' is a gaunt 'spectre of the mind' which will require all the wisdom as well as tenderness of the churches for many a year to lay to rest—if, indeed, they ever do so.

The pressing call for fresh illumination of the main Christian doctrine that 'God is love,' comes with strong appeal along at least five lines.

(1) *The special slur on the character of God.* For in addition to the general problem—the twin mysteries of pain and evil—this generation has to face a specially acute and impressive presentation of it. The War in which nearly all Europe is engaged is, in not a few respects, as strange as it is dreadful. Not the least of its weird features is the fulsome pietism of its chief mover. The Kaiser calls

[1] *Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament*, p. v.

upon God for help, assures his hosts that 'God is always on the German side,' and thanks Him effusively for every gleam of German success :—

> Remember that the German people are the chosen of God. On me, as German Emperor, the Spirit of God has descended. I am His weapon, His sword, and His vicegerent. Let all the enemies of the Germans perish. God demands their destruction, God who through me commands you to fulfil His will.

So declaims the supreme German war-lord. They are typical utterances, of which the State-controlled Professors and the Lutheran-trained people who follow them, in that militarized land, manifestly approve. But is Belgium likely to say 'Amen'? How does such theism comport with Lord Bryce's Report? We treat with the contempt it deserves the brazen attempts of Herr Bethmann-Hollweg and all his underlings in the subservient State-ordered German Press, to dismiss that Report as false. The world knows too well the characters of the investigators, and the method of their scrutiny, to be so browbeaten by German impudence. The Report is true. A great deal besides, even more horrible and disgusting, is also true. If this unutterable devilry be the work of the Kaiser's God, then it becomes the plain duty of the Christian Church so to disown such blasphemy that there shall be no possible room for mistake. The New York *Life* has summed it up all too truly :—

> The Kaiser says he and God are working together. What god can this be? Not our Christian God, our

benevolent Creator, a God of love and hope and mercy. The god that helps the Kaiser is a god of broken faith, with bloodshot eyes, loose lips, and dripping sword. He and the Kaiser make a strong team for slaughter.

Religious people in this country, and extra-German Europe, as well as America, will have no hesitation in dismissing, even with loathing, the Kaiser's conception of a God who could approve of the damnable atrocities of his Huns, and the fiendish adoption of any foul means whatever which seemed to favour his hordes—to say nothing of treachery and wholesale lies.

(2) *The witness of the Bible concerning God.* But it will not be so easy for many Christian believers to learn the hard lesson which the Kaiser's piety teaches. If he be sane—which we may perhaps here assume—then he is a sincere but deluded fanatic; finally and fatally wedded to wrong conceptions which have grown up with him and in him. Whence have they come? The people who are not Germanized will ask that, and the Christian Church must answer them. They have come from a false theory of inspiration, which has permitted and promoted a misunderstanding and misuse of the Old Testament. A few years since the editor of the *Clarion* published a foolish but popularly effective book entitled *God and My Neighbour.*[1] The churches ignored it, but the people read it—and were moved. There were some things in it

[1] For a plain reply to everything in it that merits answer, from the Christian standpoint, see *Clarion Fallacies*, by the present writer. It can still be obtained direct from him.

which Christian folk might have noted to their profit. They were greatly shocked at the reference to some parts of the Old Testament. As when the author wrote :—

> Now consider, is the God of whom we have been reading a God of love? Is He the Father of Christ? Is He not rather the savage idol of a savage tribe? Do you think that this blood-thirsty, vindictive Jahweh, who prized nothing but his own aggrandizement, and slew or cursed all who offended him, is the Creator, the same who made the jewels of the Pleiades and the resplendent mystery of the Milky Way? It is time to have done with this nightmare fetish of a murderous tribe of savages. The thought of him defiles and nauseates. We should think him too horrible and pitiless for a devil, this red-handed, black-hearted Jehovah of the Jews. This the God of heaven? This the Father of Christ? No. He will not do. He is not big enough. He is not good enough. He is a spiritual nightmare; a bad dream born in savage minds of terror and ignorance and a tigerish lust for blood.[1]

To members of the Bible League, and others, this will sound very dreadful language. But the unfortunate part is that these frightful traits of character are just exactly those which the Kaiser's Huns have shamelessly exhibited to humanity in the name of God. They have been proud of *Gott mit uns* on their belts. And their Theological Professors have upheld them. Can such a God be found anywhere, anyhow, in the New Testament?

[1] p. 72.

There is only one answer to that. Can He in the Old Testament? Yes; but only when it is read under the mistaken spell of the theory of verbal inspiration. In view of what has already been pointed out above in this connexion, it will suffice here to support one plain statement by two quotations. The statement is that the God of whom the Christian Church has to speak more earnestly than ever to the after-war world, is not the God of the Old Testament, but of the New. The one and only God worth thinking of, let alone worshipping, is He whom Paul knew as—'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort.' Whenever, and however, the Old Testament leads up to that, it may be appreciated and used. When it contradicts that, it must be set aside, unmistakably and unhesitatingly. Thus Mr. Rhondda Williams is quite justified when he writes:—

> There is no atrocity which you cannot justify if you proceed by the other method. The Elohist's God would never be a party to the Geneva Convention. To read these old commands as commands for us, is simply to reverse twenty-five centuries of progress, and put us back in a semi-barbarous age, and it is certainly to make the cross of Christ of none effect.[1]

Again; Mr. B. J. Snell, in an equally instructive little volume on *The Value of the Old Testament*, gives an excellent summary thus:—

> When a text is quoted as a divine oracle calculated to end all controversy, it is necessary to

[1] *Shall We Understand the Bible?* p. 27.

know to what stage of the long ascent it belongs, or we may find ourselves in like predicament to that lamentable error of our Puritan ancestors, who justified the Cromwellian massacre in Ireland by references to Israel's recorded actions in Canaan; or to the pitiable fallacy which led so many American Christians to apologize for slavery as a divinely ordained institution; or to John Wesley's conclusion that the giving up of witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible. All sorts of evils have been defended with a 'Thus saith the Lord' which was but the voice of the Hebrew conscience in an elementary stage of advance.[1]

Seeing, also, that in a matter of such grave importance the judgement of well-known Christian teachers becomes a valuable contribution to Christian reality, the words of Dr. Horton in his recent volume on *Reconstruction* ought to be known, and are well worth citing. In reference to the Christian appreciation of the Old Testament he says truly :—

> It must not be thought that the crude way of regarding the Bible as a uniform law for our conduct, and the things done in the Bible by the supposed command of God as a guide for our action, is always innocent. The dangerous passage in Psalm cxlix. in which the saints are called upon with a two-edged sword in their hand to execute vengeance upon the nations, and punishment upon the peoples, was used to rouse Europe to the Thirty Years' War. And the Boers in South Africa justified their oppression of the Hottentots, by the example of Israel exterminating the Canaanites at the command of Jehovah.

[1] p. 21.

When we have learnt the ethical character of God from Christ, we cannot accept even on the authority of the Old Testament statements which attribute to God unethical action. We cannot, to take a specific instance, accept the account given in the history-books, that punishment was due to Israel because Joshua spared the Gibeonites, or that the sins of Saul were to be expiated by the slaughter of his innocent sons. In all such cases, we are dealing with the interpretation which was put upon events by men who had not realized the ethical character of God; when we know God in Christ, we can never admit that this is a correct picture of God, or that the action which followed was authorized by Him.

If only religious teachers would be more courageous, and would not be hampered by the fear that they are dishonouring God if they criticize and correct things which occur in the Bible, the greater part of the scepticism which weakens the Church would be avoided.[1]

We have at present the frightful spectacle of a great nation claiming to be specially religious, and definitely Christian, supported by Theological Professors, and ostentatiously represented to the modern world by its Imperial Head, seeking to justify the immoralities and outrages of which they are guilty, by appeal to the Bible. If this monstrosity does but compel modern Evangelical Christendom to face the truth herein, it will be a valuable contribution to Christian reality for the rising generation.

(3) *The Triunity of God as revealed in Jesus*

[1] pp. 202, 209.

Christ. It is a supreme and double certainty, which no one can question, that the very highest, purest, noblest, tenderest, worthiest conception of God presented to mankind is the Christian doctrine of a heavenly Father; and that this conception is wholly due to Jesus Christ—not only revealed by Him, but embodied in Him. This characteristic it is which makes Him absolutely unique amongst all the world-teachers of religion. Whatever theological or philosophical difficulties may be involved, Christian reality, as based upon the New Testament, together with all Christian history and experience, can never postulate a Christ differing from ordinary men only in degree. He is, by all testimony besides His own, 'Son of God' in an unparalleled and unapproachable sense. It was the gradual but irresistible apprehension of this which gave rise to the Christian doctrine of the Triunity of God. It is not incumbent upon us here to justify this inference, nor even to define it with philosophical precision. The 'Athanasian' Creed—utterly shorn of its damnatory clauses—may well suffice for the latter. For the former, reference may be made to standard works upon theology.[1]

The matter for emphasis here is, that only in the transcendent Fatherhood does the love of God which is the glowing focus of the Christian faith find worthy expression. Fatherhood, including Motherhood—in one word, Parenthood, if only that term could somehow take on tenderness—is the most

[1] Especially, by way of preference, to Dr. W. N. Clarke's two volumes, *An Outline of Christian Theology* (pp. 151–181) and *The Christian Doctrine of God* (pp. 227–248). See also Dr. Scott Lidgett's careful and able volume on *The Fatherhood of God* (pp. 315–317); also the present writer's *Christian Essentials* (pp. 3–30).

real, comprehensive, and intense expression of love on earth. But Christ alone of all earth's seers and prophets has ever dared to say—'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' On any other lips than His, such words would be either lunacy or blasphemy. But they are neither from Him, because of what was in Him, which so shone out that even from Pagan watchers was wrung the confession—'Never man spoke like this man.' It was His whole being that so spoke and so shone, that the distance of years was needed to make Him and His message appreciable. The New Testament has no doctrine of the Trinity. Nor did the Apostles teach any definite Triunity concerning the God of the Gospel. It was never true that to be a Christian, a man must be a Trinitarian. Yet that does not lessen the force of the truth that, in order to realize and appreciate that Fatherhood of God which is the essence of the Christian Gospel, Christ's recorded words—'I and My Father are one'—must be taken in the fullest sublime sense which their context suggests. So that His unique oneness with the Father, and His own promise of the Spirit who was one with Him, provide plainly the germ whence, from further thought and deeper experience, the divine Triunity grew into the truest as well as richest conception of God for mortal minds. For an expression of ultimate Christian reality concerning God, as presented by the Church in modern light, we shall do well here to appreciate the testimony of three representative Christian teachers. In his *Christian Doctrine of God*, Dr. Clarke says:—

> Though speculation has often lost itself in the mystery of God, the doctrine of the Trinity has

had abundant vitality in the region of God's relations with men and their salvation. It has been held as the indispensable and sufficient key for explaining the unique divineness of all that pertains to Jesus Christ in His person, His work, and His salvation. Despite its mysteriousness it has made God seem more intelligible to men, and has helped to bring Him nearer to the hearts of His children. By its declaration of the real entrance of God into humanity, and the taking of manhood up into God, it has placed a crown of glory upon human nature, and has helped in giving practical effect to the dignity and freedom of man. This is its glory, that it has stood as a foundation that sustained the faith of ages and supported a worthy life.[1]

The New Testament refers to Christ in relation to God as 'His only begotten Son.' Upon this it is well said by Dr. Scott Lidgett that herein we see

> how God because of His Fatherhood, could call into being a potentially filial world. To be Creator means to be Father, to be Father means to be love. And before God could act as love in time, He must have existed as love in eternity. But love is social. It can only exist in the society of personal and adequate objects. There can be no love without fellowship, no fellowship without persons. A being who could exist in eternal solitude must be loveless, and it is impossible for a being complete in loneliness to become love. Therefore the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not a bare and unrelieved mystery. It shows how the nature of God is eternally such that it can give existence to creatures originated in, by, and for the divine love and for its fellowship.[2]

[1] p. 235. [2] *The Fatherhood of God*, p. 315.

For the confessed inadequacy of the term 'Persons,' and further exposition of 'the relationship of each of the three Persons to man, and to the Fatherhood in which God stands to man,' we must be content to refer to such theological treatises as the foregoing. But if, to any substantial extent, the reverent faith of the vast majority in Christendom may be taken as the modern expression of Christian reality herein, it can scarcely be better summarized than in the words of Dr. Gwatkin in his *Gifford Lectures for* 1904, 1905.

> Or take the doctrine of the Trinity, not as a conundrum of the dogmatists, but as the expression of a belief that divine life as well as human has a social element. A God whose relations are as binding for Himself as for His creatures is neither the inscrutable emptiness of the Agnostic and the Pantheist, nor the inscrutable Power of the Muslim and the Latin, but a living Father to His erring children. This is the real meaning of the decision at Nicea.
>
> The Fatherhood of God is a great and imposing truth; but is it strong enough in its current Unitarian form to bear the increasing burden which a developing society will lay on it? On the contrary, I doubt if we can continue to believe in it at all, unless we lay increasing stress on that element of the divine nature which makes such a relation possible. If many signs are not misleading, the battle of the next age will be fought round the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity; for the simple reason that it is the only serious theory of religion at present before the world which fully vindicates the social element in human nature by firmly planting it inside the divine.[1]

[1] Vol. i., p. 242; vol. ii., p. 298.

(4) *The dismissal of Calvinism as involving a colossal mistake.* Beyond the above, the time has now fully come to say plainly, and without any equivocation, that the Christian message concerning God to the modern world is not the doctrine of Calvinism. For the true and noble elements which may be found in Calvin's system, reference may be made to volumes on theology. We are here concerned only with the presentation of the Christian idea of God to coming generations, who will certainly not be merely theological. For they will be both ethical and critical. The doctrine of God which is to move the coming race will have to differ in both these respects from much that has gone before. Ecclesiastical authority, however highly organized, will not prevent men from judging God. The bare assertion of the Divine sovereignty, whether from the Bible or Church Councils, will have no weight with a democracy which is entering ever more fully into the consciousness of its right to freedom of thought as well as of speech. No conception of God will have the least chance of affecting the modern man, unless it commends itself to his moral judgement. The whole doctrine of Predestination, as it used to be proclaimed, is to-day as unthinkable as unscriptural. For which reason there must now be no hesitation or equivocation in the declaration that Calvinism is not Christianity, and the Calvinistic conception of God, in its main features, must be definitely laid aside. It was as sincerely as intelligently wrought out, but has been shown to be none the less doubly wrong. It was wrong in its foundation, in that it took and ever treated as literal history the opening chapters of

Genesis. It was wrong in its inferences, in that it built upon that foundation a doctrine of Divine sovereignty which is neither critically permissible nor ethically tolerable. The late Mr. Aubrey L. Moore, in his criticism of Mr. Cotter Morison's *Service of Man,* put it thus :—

> It may therefore be well at once to say that if Calvinism is Christianity, *cadit quaestio,* it is madness to attempt any longer to defend the morals of Christianity. Calvinism is not accidentally but essentially immoral, since it makes the distinction between right and wrong a matter of positive enactment, and thereby makes it possible to assert that what is immoral for man is moral for God, because He is above morality.[1]

In some popular theology, the notion yet obtains that whatever God does is right, simply because He does it; irrespective of all that commends itself to our consciences as good and true and righteous. But we must protest that to determine, by 'divine decree,' the irresistible destinies of men before they were born, whether for this world or the next, would be absolutely immoral. The Calvinistic reply—whether Supralapsarian or Sublapsarian—that it must be moral, because it is God's decree, cannot now be tolerated. Such an answer can never more be accepted by the modern man, nor permitted in the Christian Church

(5) *The universal Fatherhood of God as the Christian truth of truths.* Yet no mere negation of Calvinism will suffice for the need of to-day. If Calvinism be not true, what is?—will be the insistent

[1] *Science and the Faith,* p. 118.

inquiry. The answer must be clear and unhesitating. ' Divine sovereignty ' is only true in fact, or Christian in doctrine, as it issues from Divine Fatherhood. The universal Fatherhood of God—apart from any human qualification—is the one supreme, all-comprehending ' fundamental ' of the Christian faith. On it rests Christ's substitution of the two Great Commands of His Kingdom, with their far greater scope, for the ten words of Moses which formed the basis of Jewish law. The change herein which has come, and is yet more fully coming, over the Christian message to the world is vast indeed. The old doctrine could not be better stated than by Dr. Candlish. Its main points were, in summary, that—

(i.) God's fundamental and primary relation to man was that of Creator and Governor. His rule and government must be in the proper sense legal and judicial, absolute and sovereign, of the most thoroughly royal, imperial, autocratic kind.

(ii.) Jesus Christ was the only historical person who was really and by nature the Son of God.

(iii.) The only other sons of God were the elect in Christ, who became by adoption partakers in His Sonship. Beyond these limits, there was no Fatherhood, only sovereignty.

This general conception has not only prevailed in Scotch and Welsh Churches, but for the most part in the Evangelical Churches of England. It is still so held by many Baptists, some Congregationalists, and even some Methodists. None the less is it false. Its general scheme of religion has been succinctly summarized by Dr. Washington Gladden thus :—

> The idea was that the sin of Adam cancelled the fact of Fatherhood; that Adam and all his descendants ceased to be sons of God, and became the subjects of His government, justly exposed to the penalties of disobeyed law. Provision was made, however, in the Atonement for restoration to the filial condition of these alienated subjects; and all who accepted Christ as their substitute, and received His saving grace, were adopted into the family of God, to them He became once more a Father, and they were acknowledged as His children; but all the rest, who failed to avail themselves of this provision, were aliens and strangers, subjects of His law indeed, but in nowise sharers of His parental love.[1]

In regard to this conception, which unquestionably is yet, to vast numbers, their only idea of Christianity, the time has come to say unequivocally—in view of what the whole modern upheaval is bringing in its train—as the writer just quoted does, that—

> A fuller study of the words of Jesus Christ makes it plain that this doctrine utterly misrepresents His teaching respecting men's relation to God, and the social consciousness of this generation finds it impossible to entertain such an idea of God as this theory implies.

He might also have added that modern science, proved to be true to this extent, definitely negatives the popular assumption of a literal individual named Adam, in a literal Garden of Eden, with a literal serpent, and all the rest which this theory assumes. The only actuality as to the Fall of man

[1] *A Modern Man's Theology*, p. 31.

is put by Sir Oliver Lodge as quoted above. It merits repetition here, for the sake of the truth involved :—

> At a certain stage of development man became conscious of a difference between right and wrong, so that thereafter when his actions fell below a normal standard of conduct, he felt ashamed and sinful. He thus lost his animal innocency and entered on a long period of human effort and failure.[1]

With this finding of science, which is certainly true, the doctrine of Jesus—who never once mentions any 'Fall'—as to the Fatherhood of God, comes into no collision at all. The tragedy is that science does come into collision with what is known as 'popular theology'; and that is the matter which the churches must now face with more seriousness. They are, indeed, not a little concerned that a Christian teacher should be 'sound' in his views concerning the Bible, or the Virgin Birth, or the nature of Christ's Resurrection, in regard to which it must at least be acknowledged that there is room amongst equally devoted Christians for differences of conviction. But when in regard to the greatest of all truths a preacher openly declares, as one in London did not long since :—

> God is not the universal Father of the race. He is only the Father of that part of the race that have been adopted into His family by Him. He is not the Father of the world of mankind. I do not know of a more damnable doctrine than that

[1] *Substance of Faith Allied with Science*, p. 20.

doctrine which is so popular in some great pulpits of the land to-day, known as the Fatherhood of God,

he is yet said to be highly spiritual and a devoted evangelist.[1] Nor is it so long since a well-known Wesleyan minister openly declared that—

> He knew of hardly anything preached as Christianity to-day that had worked more irreparable ruin than the teaching that there was such a thing as the Universal Fatherhood of God, and its corollary that there was a universal brotherhood of man.

This extract comes from a local paper, and is a true report. What, then, is likely to be the effect of such announcement upon the minds of the people in that important Lancashire city? Happily, there are many nobler statements in careful print to which the seeker after Christian truth herein may be referred.[2]

All that we need do here is to summarize the Christian truths which follow from this greatest of principles, and lay stress upon the need of their unmistakable statement, in the name of Christ's Gospel, for the present age. Words are inadequate

[1] That this is literally true, is shown by the fact that at the Cheltenham Free Church Congress this avowal was publicly challenged by the present writer, and he was promptly ruled out as being 'controversial' and introducing an element of discord. So that whether public preaching is *true* or not, seems sometimes to be for such gatherings a minor matter; what is required is that it should not be provocative of discussion.

[2] As, for instance, Dr. W. N. Clarke's *Outline of Christian Theology* and *The Christian Doctrine of God* and *Can I Believe in God the Father.* Also Dr. Scott Lidgett's volume, *The Fatherhood of God,* published by C. H. Kelly. There are, happily, many others; but if these do not suffice, nothing will.

for such a task, seeing that the significance of this ' fundamental doctrine '—which is received as true in all its fullness from Christ alone, not from science, nor from philosophy, and distinguishes Christianity from every other form of religion known to mankind —is measureless. It not only affects but must rule all our thoughts in regard to God Himself ; human nature ; the true Gospel ; the doctrines of theology ; the function of the Christian Church ; and the great realities of the hereafter.

(i.) As to God Himself, of course the term ' Fatherhood ' is but symbolic. It not only includes all that we mean by Motherhood, but is employed simply to express, as nearly as any word can, on an inexpressible scale, what the wisest and tenderest love and care of the noblest earthly parents mean to their child. It is the best concrete representation of the significance of the unique Christian conception that ' God is love.' It yields at once the simplest and sublimest, purest and loftiest thought of God that can be entertained by mortal minds. If love be the highest and deepest attainment of human nature, the Divine Fatherhood is the highest and deepest conception of love. As in our human midst the parents' love is ever the most unselfish in itself, and brings greatest good to the child, so—declares the Christian doctrine of God—does the love of God yearn over humanity.

(ii.) As to man, it involves the unparalleled dignity and worth of human nature. It is the eighth Psalm—' Thou hast made him but little lower than God, and crownest him with glory and honour '—incandescent in ' the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'

As God's child, man is no less morally free, than he is limited by heredity and environment. The assurance of this relationship to the divine is, for normal man, the most actual satisfaction of his present highest cravings, the crown of science as to his past, and the hope of civilization for his future.

(iii.) But it is in connexion with what is so familiarly termed the 'Gospel,' that the greatest significance of the Divine Fatherhood appears. Had it been apprehended, taught, appreciated, reciprocated, the history of Christianity in the world would have been as a bright dawn after a dreary night, growing more and more towards a perfect noon. Alas, no one of these is true, save on a small scale, even yet. The Gospel is not apprehended, let alone reciprocated, by humanity at large. Apparently it will be a long while before that comes to pass. It is not, however, our Christian task to unmask the future, but to be true to the present. The time has fully come to show, much more plainly than hitherto, wherein the 'good tidings' associated with the name of Jesus Christ consists. Even in the avowal that the real and universal Fatherhood of God is the very heart and soul of Christ's message to humanity. It is the pith and marrow of His Gospel for mankind. There is no 'central' doctrine of the Christian faith, any more than there is a central organ of the body. As a healthy brain would be useless, or a vigorous heart, or perfect nerves, or any one of these without the rest, to make a normal human life, so is the cross of Jesus Christ nothing without His life, and character, and teaching, preceding it, and His real resurrection following. As to the

latter, indeed, it seems almost as if Paul had anticipated some of the well-meant but mistaken shibboleths of modern Evangelical religion. For he says with all possible emphasis, 'It is Christ that died, yea, *rather* that is risen from the dead.' 'If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.' We know that, ever working in all the vital organs of the body, is something which no medical science can either define or deny. The doctor calls it 'a good constitution.' Biology pronounces it 'vitality.' No one knows what it is. Every healthy man knows that it is. The reality of the Divine Fatherhood is to all the other main doctrines of Christianity, what vitality is to lungs, or heart, or limbs, in the body. It is their *fons et origo*, their source and stay.

But the Divine Fatherhood is as necessary practically as theologically, to any real Gospel. Too long have opponents of Christianity had occasion to say—as noticed above—'Let us ask, then, what Christianity is doing. It is preaching about sin, sin, sin.' That there must be due notice taken of sin in a world like this, ought to go without saying. It is worse than pitiful nonsense to say, as the writer thus quoted does :—

> As the sun shines alike upon the evil and the good, so in the eyes of justice the saint and the sinner are as one.[1]

But it is another thing, an equally false and bad extreme, to make sin the starting-point of the Christian message to the world, and its reality the

[1] *God and My Neighbour*, p. 196.

main theme of religious discussion. There is little 'good tidings' in reiterating to men that they are sinners. To a great extent they know it, and often own it. To assure them that they may be saved from sin by the acceptance of certain theological conceptions, or submission to ecclesiastical rites, has less and less attractive influence with every generation. The Revised Version has done well to eliminate the words 'damn' and 'damnation,' which have taken on to-day a sense never intended in the New Testament. But it is increasingly manifest that religious appeals based on threatening, have really lost their force for the men of this age. What men need to hear is what they do not otherwise know, put to them in a way which will at once command their rational respect, and will appeal to that which is best within them. Thus, in full view of practical life, the Gospel message is not to exhort sinners to become the children of God, any more than it is a parent's wisdom or duty to bid a naughty boy or girl become his child. All sinners are already the children of God, as really as the prodigal was his father's son all the time he was wasting his substance in riotous living. What he needed, and that which saved him, was the reminder of his own heart that since he was the son of his father, he not only could but ought to turn to the love he was scorning, and behave as a true son should, by coming back to the love that waited for him.

> And when he came *to himself* he said, How many hired servants of *my father* have food enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger. I will arise and go to *my father*.

Yet in open defiance of the lesson which plainly Jesus here sought to teach, some preachers have persisted, even to this hour, in declaring that only saints were the 'children of God,' or the subjects of His fatherly love. So has the very essence of the 'good tidings'—so good that apart from the assurance of Jesus Christ it is incredible—been ignored, and the mightiest appeal for the holiest been left out of account. Who will say what would have been, or yet would be, the effect of 'Gospel preaching,' if it brought home to the minds and hearts of men, not that they were sinners 'shaken over the eternal pit' by an angry God, but the real children of God whose heart was always yearning over them, entreating them to remember their true dignity, and return to the love that was waiting for them? To 'receive the adoption of sons' would then be so to respond to such divine entreaty as to prove the highest joys of conscious sonship, and fulfil both here and hereafter all the noblest possibilities of redeemed human nature.

(iv.) When it is asked, as probably it will be by many sincere believers, 'What, then, becomes of the doctrine of the Atonement?' they might be referred to the whole library of treatises which have been written on that theme; but it would not help them much to lose themselves in contradictory theories. Christian hymnology is unfortunately responsible for measureless mistakes and woful misrepresentation hereupon. Pages might be filled with quotations of lines sung which were never true, and which the quickened ethical perception of this and the coming age most certainly will not tolerate. The churches which perpetuate them will simply be forsaken—as

they are being forsaken now—in spite of all declamations about the 'simple Gospel.' In a word, the cross of Jesus did not, and does not, stand for an angry God 'punishing His dear Son' in the stead of any one. The message of the Church to the modern world is that in the cross of Christ they may see, if they will but look on Him who suffered there, the supreme and final proof of the Father's love of the world—as John iii. 16 so plainly declares—exhibited in the self-yielding of the beloved Son who was one with Himself, to the direst human death, in the fulfilment of His mission. That mission was to make known beyond doubt the Father's love, the consequent sinfulness of sin, the dreadfulness of the alienation which human sin involves, the call of the Father to His children in the far country to come back to Him. As Paul put it :—

> We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God.

Theories of the Atonement may all be well given up to theological students, if only the Church will show mankind that in the cross of Jesus the Fatherhood of God is stretching out arms of love to a self-alienated world. The Gospel would have men look on the gracious Sufferer there, as proof, unmistakable and unchallengeable, of the sinfulness of sin, as well as of the reality of the Father's heartache over those whom He would win back to Himself. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, instead of counting men's trespasses against them.' So did the Apostle truly sum up his whole teaching when

he avowed—'It is all the doing of God who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and has permitted us to promote this, His reconciliation.' That is the Gospel's tenderest and strongest appeal to the age that is upon us.

(v.) Therefrom the great function of the Christian Church follows. For it is too evident to require any demonstration, that Fatherhood means brotherhood, somewhere, somehow. There can be no fatherhood where there is no childhood. Brotherhood amongst men—which, of course, includes all that is also meant by sisterhood—is the natural, necessary, and Christian correlative of the supreme truth that 'there is one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.'[1] Its sociological implications we will presently consider. But the time has come, more than ever heretofore, for the unequivocal and unhesitating statement of what Christ's 'Kingdom of Heaven' or 'Kingdom of God' means for the human race. That God—the only God worthy of men's acceptance or worship—is the Father of all men, must mean that all which the clearest, purest, most reverent thought can put into the conception of fatherhood is pledged, on Christ's authority, to every human being. Without any respect for race or clime, for position or character, simply as being human, they are truly the children of God. Consequently, with similar assurance and comprehensiveness, all men are

[1] Eph. iv. 6. The correction in the R.V. here is noteworthy. Professor Abbott well says that the pronoun 'you' of the A.V. 'was no doubt added as a gloss.' The textual warrant for its omission is overwhelming. All too long has it served as a misleading pointer in the Calvinistic direction, and marred the noble comprehensiveness of the Apostolic utterance.

brothers. In the light of such a Gospel, the Apostle's quotation—' We are also His offspring '—becomes a bond which ought to bind all nations, all families, all individuals, in a fellowship as real as human language can express. It is the Church's high commission to make such a brotherhood not only known, but obligatory, universally. The tragic contrast to this which humanity at present exhibits, alike in peace and war, is the very reason for the Church's ministry. The greater the sad contradiction between Christ's doctrine of human brotherhood, and what we see and hear of the facts of civilization, the more pressing is the need for all that Christian churches can be and do, to be true to their Lord.

It is manifest now as never before, in the sight of modern humanity, that only the principles which He ordains can put an end to the personal quarrels or political tyrannies, the social evils and injustices, the national jealousies and conflicts, which as yet make the mention of ' brotherhood ' but an occasion for the sneer of contempt, or the sigh of despair. So far, therefore, from being a mere esoteric society, cut off from the rest of mankind by a rigid creed, and administered by a special priestly caste, apart from whom the ' salvation ' of which the Gospel speaks cannot be known, the Christian Church has for its most real worth to mankind the responsibility of both proclaiming and exhibiting a genuine brotherhood based on the universal Divine Fatherhood ; so real that love is its only law ; so practical as to cover the whole area of human need ; so broad that all men, women, and children, by sheer reason of their humanity, are welcome to its inmost fellowship. The only condition of such

church membership is the soul's response to the Father's love.

(vi.) The last phase of the significance of Christ's Gospel, as emanating from the truth of the Divine Fatherhood, is by no means the least. If all men were brothers, many problems which worry and depress the noblest philanthropists would doubtless have no existence. But even then, there would be the grim reality of death to face, and the craving for something beyond death, which is as normal a human instinct as the very desire to live. Suicides, however pitiful, are, after all, monstrosities. So are the men and women who profess to be content to go out as a candle, or die as a beast. So long as men and women are human, they will echo the truth which poetry expresses more forcefully than prose :—

> My own dim life shall teach me this,
> That life shall live for evermore;
> Else earth is darkness at the core,
> And dust and ashes all that is.

Ever since prehistoric bipeds became human, as far back as our records go, men have protested in a myriad ways against the notion that death ends all. That feeling was never more widespread or deeply influential than to-day. Apart from the distinctive Christian message, the ever-growing interest in spiritism, telepathy, theosophy, and occult investigations, testifies to the hunger of the heart of the people for some hope beyond the grave. When men of the intellectual calibre and practical judgement, as well as unimpeachable character, of Mr. W. T. Stead and Sir Oliver Lodge—not to mention a host of others—deliberately testify to the reality

of post-mortem phenomena, it is somewhat too late, as well as impertinent, for a minority of individuals, whether scientists or otherwise, to assume superior rationality in declaring that mind is but a ' function of the phronema,' and that when the brain is disintegrated, all is over for a human personality for evermore.

Just now, of course, the problems of the hereafter are most heavily weighted and keenly felt by reason of the awful carnage on land and sea which seems to show that civilization, when it runs amok, as in war, regards human beings as of no more account than trees or beasts. But humanity does not think so. Nor do the tragic hosts of mourning fathers, mothers, sisters, lovers, fail to feel their own individual loss and grief, because there are so many. ' Not lost, but gone before,' is the bitter-sweet with which myriads of broken hearts try to soothe their own sorrow and lighten that of others. What the Christian Gospel has more definitely to say to mankind hereupon may stand over for a moment. All that is here borne in mind is that Christ's revelation of the Divine Fatherhood is so real, so unmistakable, so all-embracing, that we need have no gruesome fears concerning our own departed loved ones. Nor ought we to permit, let alone encourage, any of those repulsive and horrible suggestions which have all too long been associated with Christianity, as to the future fate of the millions of mankind who, alike in peace and war, daily pass out of this life into the unknown. For this certainly is known, that death is nothing to the Fatherhood of which Jesus speaks. It no more lessens the love which that betokens, than passing

from one room to another in any happy home lessens the paternal love for the children. It is as true of the thousands who are lost at sea, or the myriads who fall in battle, or the hosts of the unknown who weekly die in our great cities, as of the veriest saints of any church, that they pass through death into the Father's arms. To believe and teach this thankfully is, of course, very far from suggesting that saint and sinner are alike, or that death is in any sense a moral leveller. To pass into the Father's arms is to meet love's severity as well as tenderness. 'Our God is a consuming fire' is as really an element in the Divine Fatherhood, as that 'God is love.' The double truth which should bring at once all the comfort and all the warning that human nature needs, is that there is nothing in God to fear except His love; but that love in presence of moral evil can be and must be severe to the uttermost. But there is no 'wrath to come' which is not the expression of love Divine.[1]

(vii.) The full significance of this greatest of truths to the Christian Church and the world around it, cannot be expressed in few words. Reality in the spiritual sphere is as inexpressible as vitality in the bodily frame. It is so inexpressible just because it is so real and potent. The following summary is all that can be suggested here.

[1] The words of Dr. James Drummond in his *Studies in Christian Doctrine* truly summarize the whole case:—'For us, too, it may be more reverent not to endeavour to penetrate the dark veil. It is enough to know that the good and the bad alike are in the hands of God, and that He will be neither cruel nor unjust. There are mysteries of iniquity and suffering on earth which we cannot solve; much less with our limited knowledge can we solve the mysteries of eternity. But God is love; and we may wait in trust for the lifting of the veil' (p. 514).

(*a*) As to the relation between saints and sinners. However valid this distinction, there never was any Christian truth in the old opprobrious exaggerations which were thought to be part of the Gospel. The eighth chapter of John, and the seventh chapter of Romans, were equally misinterpreted. It was never true that the phrase 'Your father the devil,' addressed on one occasion to certain perverse Jews,[1] was a formal and final definition of human nature. The context shows plainly what was intended. A fair induction from all the teachings of Christ and the Apostles leads plainly to the simple and homely, but none the less real and deep, conclusion, that all the true and necessary distinction between saints and sinners, converted and unconverted, penitent and impenitent, is expressed in saying that the one is the conscious, appreciative, loving, obedient child, whilst the other is the opposite. The true, sufficient, and final definition of sin is that it is the scorn of the Father's love, involving guilt only in the degree in which it is instructed and wilful. Even as it would be in any human family. The new-born babe is at first but a little animal, as regardless of parental love as the cradle in which it lies. It is none the less the father's child, and the object of his love. But in the processes of normal growth it passes through the four stages of recognition of that love, appreciation, reciprocation, obedience, into the experiences of conscious and worthy childhood. However and whenever this takes place, it constitutes a genuine 'new birth' or 'birth from above.' But the bad child represents the absence of this 'soul's awakening,' or the

[1] See Dr. Scott Lidgett's volume, p. 47.

despising of his birthright after the fashion of Esau. And the wrong or sin of such a negation depends—as the Apostle Paul so plainly shows in the beginning of his letter to the Romans—upon what is known or not known concerning the Father.

Thus in the normal case, 'conversion,' or the 'new birth,' or whatever other name be adopted, stands for that soul-development which is most truly expressed as 'realization.' This is well expressed by Dr. D. S. Cairns when he says that—

> All the traditional expressions whereby the Church has expressed the birth and the growth of the Christian life in man—Conversion, Regeneration, Justification, and Sanctification—relate simply to phases in the rise and development of this son-life, in this progressive awakening of the soul of man to the full meaning of the Fatherhood of God; and the peculiar Christian morality is simply the carrying out of this fundamental idea in the practical life of the world.[1]

But in the abnormal case, where there has been in greater or less degree a wandering away like the prodigal's, conversion involves reversion. But in either case the change of heart, by whatever name it be known, becomes necessary, not in order that the sinner may become the child of God, but just because he is that already. If he were not already a real child, he could never become a loving and obedient child. Even as in any home, no amount of coaxing, petting, or threatening a favourite dog could cause it to become a child. Man as man is, as the Psalmist said, 'but little lower than God,'

[1] *Christianity in the Modern World*, p. 67.

made 'in His image, after His likeness.'[1] The conversion of any impenitent sinner into the genuine saint is only possible because he was the actual child of God before he became the loving and obedient child. From this unmistakable truth flows all else of Christian reality in church life.

(*b*) The true apprehension and appreciation of the Divine Fatherhood leads to the sweetest, deepest, richest Christian experience, amidst all life's tribulations and conflicts. It is often the only refuge of the troubled heart, in presence of insoluble mysteries of pain. The blinding storm which drives even the purest soul to cry, 'My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' is only hushed into peace and hope by the trust which can say, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.'

(*c*) The same appreciation sets up, for every one who knows it, the highest standard of duty, and of character. The letters of the New Testament are full of reminders and exhortations to this effect:—

> As obedient children, not framing your lives after your former passions when you knew no better, but rather following the Holy One who called you, be yourselves also holy in your whole deportment; for you know it is written, Be holy because I am holy.[2]

Such holiness, whether slighted or emulated, is the crown of human character, whenever men are true

[1] It is well expressed also in Ps. c. 3 by the well-warranted change in the Revised Version—'It is He that hath made us, and we are His'—or, still more literally, 'and to Him we belong.' The light of Christ's revelation alone shows the full significance of this.

[2] 1 Pet. i. 14–16.

to the ideal of sonship portrayed in the New Testament.

(*d*) Moreover, this very appreciation of divine sonship provides the necessary dynamic for the highest aim, in that it also supplies the noblest stimulus. Even in our homes, the normal child feels strongest inspiration in the thought of helping father or mother. It is remarkable that on this higher plane, viz. of the true child of God co-operating with the Father, no finer expression of it can be found than in the words of England's greatest unbeliever in the nineteenth century, who claimed for his 'religion of humanity' that—

> It superadds the feeling that in making this the rule of our life, we may be co-operating with the unseen Being to whom we owe all that is enjoyable in life—the feeling of helping God, of requiting the good He has given, by a voluntary co-operation which He really needs, and by which a somewhat nearer approach may be made to the fulfilment of His purposes. To do something during life towards bringing this consummation ever so little nearer is the most animating and invigorating thought which can inspire a human creature.[1]

How much more potent is this conviction for those who believe in the Divine Fatherhood as Jesus revealed it, words are inadequate to say.

(*e*) Herein certainly lies that unmeasured superiority of Christianity over all other religions on earth, which marks it out—even in these days of almost excessive appreciation of their good points—as the final and universal religion of humanity.

[1] *Three Essays on Religion*, by J. S. Mill (Cheap Edition), p. 108.

(*f*) Yet again—in the reality and comprehensiveness of the Divine Fatherhood, the Christian Church finds its only valid but ever-sufficient motive for all Missionary zeal. Not because they are in danger of 'eternal perdition,' but because they are our brothers and sisters in the Gospel, less privileged and more needy than ourselves, are we bound in love and honour to fulfil our Lord's ideal that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive,' and so 'preach the Gospel to every creature.' The rest is in His hands.

(*g*) Last, though not least, comes the truth that the Divine Fatherhood, in all its tender intensity no less than its world-wide extent, provides the very soul and substance of the Christian duty towards our own children at home. The pitiful delusion that they are the 'children of the devil' until they have been 'regenerated' in priestly baptism, is scarcely worse than the 'evangelical' error of supposing, and sometimes even teaching, that they must all be converted in the sense of 'reversion' before they can become the children of God. The case of 'the prodigal son' has sometimes been so over-preached, that it has almost become a doctrine that even the children of Christian parents must go wrong before they can go right—must wander away before they can be welcomed to the Father's heart. Whereas all the time there stands out in clear and comforting relief, not only the example of Jesus, who declared concerning the little ones whom His arms enfolded, 'Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven,' but the emphatic confirmation of the Apostle in his dealing with early church difficulties.

> For the unbelieving husband is hallowed by union with his wife, and the unbelieving wife is hallowed through her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, whereas in point of fact they are holy.[1]

It is to be feared that the Christian reality of the case herein is more often forgotten or ignored than appreciated and acted upon. The old Calvinistic fallacy, like many another, dies hard, and even devoted Christian parents are afraid to tell their children, with plain and tender assurance, that they are the children of God as truly as they are their own. If this were done, surely thence would follow the truest and strongest of all appeals.

> Give Him then, and ever give,
> Thanks for all that we receive.
> Man we for his kindness love,
> How much more our God above!

On such lines it ought not to be difficult for any truly Christian father or mother to confer upon child life at once the greatest sense of personal worth, the sweetest sense of comfort, and the noblest impulse for the highest which youth is capable of appreciating. So with more blessed frequency would be fulfilled that Christian ideal of childhood which for pure happiness, loving tenderness, and valid hopefulness, transcends any other upon earth—

> O happy home, whose little ones are given
> Early to Thee, in humble faith and prayer;
> To Thee, their Friend, who from the heights of heaven
> Guides them and guards with more than mother's care.

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 14.

Such in all reality, even though in brevity, is the conception of God which alone will provide valid support for the Christianity of the future. It cannot, alas, be said as yet that Christian churches are thus teaching, with the unanimity which must produce most impression, for there are some still left which are vigorously insisting upon other views. The assertion here, none the less modest for being emphatic, is that the above representation of God is what *all* the churches ought to teach, and what will have to be made plain if, when the War is over, the foundations of Christianity are to be firm enough to sustain a world-wide religion for the twentieth century. It cannot be said that the majority who are outside the churches are atheists. Neither are they, in the technical sense of the word, agnostics. They believe in a 'higher power' which they try to hope is kind and good. But beyond that, all is confusion and uncertainty. Their religion is a mixture of perplexity and fear, doubt and darkness, which yields little stimulus for the present, or comfort for the future. Never in the world's history has the pathetic appeal of Philip to Jesus in those last dark hours, found so wide or deep an echo throughout humanity as now—'Lord, show us the Father, and that will satisfy us.' It is at once the solemn duty and the glorious privilege of all Churches which rightly bear the Christian name, to give an unequivocal and unmistakable response to that human cry.

II. Man

It is now some fifty years since Professor Seeley, in his famous *Ecce Homo*, penned the indictment of

conventional religion which we have already noticed. His assertion that—

> It makes them exceedingly narrow in their sympathies, disposed to deny and explain away even the most manifest virtues displayed by men, and to despair of the future destiny of the great majority of their fellow creatures, that instead of binding them to their kind it divides them from it by a gulf which they themselves proclaim to be impassable and eternal,[1]

was then undoubtedly what he said—'a just picture of a large class of religious men.' That it has prevailed since his day to no small extent, cannot be denied. As too often in the name of religion the conception of God has been repellent, so has the estimate of man been correspondingly depressing. Christianity has been made to rest upon human corruption, and the whole Gospel pivoted upon the sinfulness of sin. But that such a representation of the Christian faith does not now universally prevail, is plain enough. The influence of the irresistible spread of modern knowledge since Seeley's time has been immeasurable. Sir Oliver Lodge, in his introduction to *Ecce Homo*, has well said :—

> Reviewing the book, we must thankfully realize how great progress has now been made, at any rate in thought, towards a better understanding of genuine Christianity. Our acts and practical achievement still fall terribly short, but in thought there has been a distinct effort in many parts of Europe to throw overboard needless accumulations of tradition, and return to the early and simple teachings.[2]

[1] Everyman's Library Edition, p. 136. [2] p. ix.

(i.) The result is that to-day, as a fact which the Evangelical Churches are somewhat loth to acknowledge, there are inevitably many shades and differences of opinion. But there is little room for doubt as to what has been, and yet is, earnestly taught, as being the only real Christianity. It is based upon an acceptance as literal and exact history of the opening chapters of Genesis, with the alleged consequence that through that sin of an actual individual Adam, all men became both guilty and 'totally depraved,' that 'original sin' remains so potent in human nature that 'all are in danger of eternal perdition, unless there be some definite faith on their part in the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ.' As to the sincerity and prevalence of this conception, there can be no question. Nor is there any doubt that it is believed to be most for the glory of God and the good of man. None the less is it based upon a false theory of inspiration which does not truly represent the Bible; it assumes as literal history what we now know is not such; and it makes the starting-point of the Christian faith to be a wholesale condemnation which does justice to neither the love of God nor the nature of man. It is equally untrue to fact and depressing in influence.

(ii.) There are, however, many other influences in modern life which are humanly both belittling and depressing to an unmeasured extent. Such, for instance, as these. The enormous increase of population inevitably tends to diminish the real value of the individual. Law seeks, we know, more and more jealously to guard the life of every citizen; but it is not the mere protection of the body which makes

life worth living. Laws do not touch that inner world where a man's own estimate of himself decides whether it is better for him to live or die. In a small community each man may account himself a unit. In our great modern cities he feels himself to be a cipher, which only accident or crime redeems from practical nonentity.

Our modern knowledge of the vastness of the universe does not tend to encourage him. Only Dr. Wallace, amongst men of repute, could think of this little planet now as our fathers did, i.e. as the living centre of the universe. No one believes that, and our children are daily taught the emphatic contrary. A man is but a speck, crawling on a speck, which itself goes round a speck, in an absolutely boundless universe. How can science give to such a human bacterium any sense of worth? Does the now accepted doctrine of evolution help him? The man who can believe Milton's graphic representation of literal history embodied in the Genesis account of human creation, might take to himself some comfort from the sense of value which such 'special creation' suggests. But it is quite another thing to face what we now know to be true, as stated above.

Professor Haeckel gloats over the fact that—

> Our own human nature, which exalted itself into an image of God in its anthropistic illusion, sinks to the level of a placental mammal which has no more value for the universe at large than the ant, the fly of a summer's day, the microscopic infusorium, or the smallest bacillus. Humanity is but a transitory phase of the evolution of an eternal substance, a particular phenomenal form

of matter and energy, the true proportion of which we soon see when we set it on the background of infinite space and eternal time.[1]

That which is true in this estimate must be faced quite as honestly as that which is not true may be repudiated. The childish notions of our forefathers concerning human history, which represented man as springing from nothing but dust, through special divine creation, some six thousand years ago, must be frankly and finally set aside. Humanity's evolution from the anthropoids ought not, indeed, to bring any trouble to the adult mind. For as Henry Ward Beecher used to say, 'What does it matter that I am evolved from apes, so long as I am evolved far enough?' It is as foolish to despise human nature because of gradual development through long ages from lower creatures, as it would be to contemn the character and work of the Prime Minister because he was once a babe in long-clothes, and has only become a noble type of manhood through many intervening years. Whether they are pleased or displeased, religious teachers to-day have to reckon with the scientific verdict, based upon unquestionable skill and prolonged patience, that man as such, definitely distinct from the nearest vertebrates, can be traced back in earth's records some half a million years.[2] It must

[1] *Riddle of the Universe* (Cheap Edition), p. 87.

[2] The concluding words, indeed, of Dr. Keith's latest elaborate investigation, *The Antiquity of Man*, are that 'From what we know and from what we must infer of the ancestry of Eoanthropus, of Neanderthal man, and of modern man, we have reasonable grounds for presuming that man had reached the human standard in size of brain by the commencement of the Pliocene period. From the figures given

be owned that such knowledge supplies quite a new commentary upon the Biblical phrase—'God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him.' Viewed from the scientific standpoint, which is undoubtedly becoming general, it would seem as if humanity was indeed only 'a transitory phase' of evolution, and one may well ask—'How is any comfort or hope to come from that, to the tiny though intense world of individual consciousness?'

If, then, in despair a man turns away from such an estimate of himself, and plunges into practical life, as well he may, will he be reassured? Will he not rather find that 'the fight of life,' as forced upon him by our modern system of 'business,' is equally depressing? For myriads it leaves but small chance indeed, to make life anything more than a pitiless struggle for food and clothes. The sordid details are plainly described elsewhere. When faced, they make one wonder why suicide is not ten times more frequent than we know it. During these dark days our gaze is diverted somewhat from the pains of peace, by the horrors of war. At the time of writing these words, the latest account of the price to be paid by our nation alone, as its share in this Armageddon, is that our 'casualties' amount to more than 500,000, of whom some 100,000 are actually killed. Of the rest, how many are maimed

it will be seen that the Pleistocene and Pliocene periods are estimated to cover a period of about one million years. That period, on the grounds defined above, represents the antiquity of man. There is not a single fact known to me which makes the existence of a human form even in the Miocene period an impossibility' (pp. 510, 511). Every one who is acquainted with even the elements of Geology, will appreciate such an estimate.

for life, no one can say. The estimate of Germans killed, from a most careful source, is one million! But for some merciful degree of callousness through non-realization of what is happening, the depression which must naturally accompany such tragic records would be intolerable.

(iii.) Even when men turn in their sad perplexities to religion, they are by no means sure of comfort. Many of the favourite popular expressions of Christian faith are anything but enheartening. The glamour of a misleading pietism has all too often led believers to think that they were honouring God by dishonouring themselves. Rightful humility has been distorted into grovelling abjectness, which has libelled and slandered human nature in the name of penitence, and tended decidedly more in the direction of religious mania than of a cheering confidence in God. It must, however, be owned that even pietistic self-contempt has not dragged human nature down so low as the anti-Christian philosophy which goes by the false name of 'Determinism.' What this amounts to has already been sufficiently pointed out. But when manhood is taken away, and only thinghood left, such philosophy deserves branding as the greatest insult ever put upon human nature. In varied forms and degrees, however, it is much more prevalent to-day than ordinary preachers and churches acknowledge. It comes as a kind of final kick at poor humanity, already prostrate under its burden of cares and sorrows, sins and fears, and tends to make it alike helpless and hopeless in despair.

(iv.) For all the reasons thus briefly noticed, and many others, humanity never needed a Gospel

which should be real in its comfort and inspiration as it does now. The cry—'Who will show us any good?' is as much more pathetic as more widespread than ever before. As surely as the parched traveller in the desert craves the life-giving water, and cares little in comparison for his bag of priceless pearls, so does modern humanity, in spite of all its fuss and show and fight, pine for real good tidings—for a message of truth which men can honestly believe, and of hope which they may rationally trust. Surely this, above all else, is the meaning and mission of Christianity, according to the life and death, the works and teachings, of Jesus Christ. His Gospel assuredly deals with men as they are, not only as sinners, but as sufferers. To both alike, His words of welcome and hope are unmistakable, whatever churches may have made of them. 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' No 'scheme' of doctrine, or 'standard' of a church, which is false to that, can ever be true to Him, any more than to the needs of mankind. Even His solemn doctrine of sin comforts and stimulates whilst it warns. It crowns man with glory and honour, in treating him both as a moral being—immeasurably removed from any 'machine'—and as a child of God, as much above a 'placental mammal' as a living, loving child is above a foetus in embryo. The comfort comes with the warning, for His doctrine of sin—which is quite untouched by any modern anthropology—implies not only moral capacity, but relation to a loving Father. Esau in the Old Testament, and the prodigal in the New, are the true types of the only sinners that are possible.

They are not victims of Adam's 'fall,' nor incarnations of 'original sin,' but scorners of a Father's love, and despisers of their relation to Him. Thus the true Christian doctrine of man warns, comforts, stimulates, in one. Civilized mankind not only needs such a Gospel now more than ever, but is pining for it. If the churches after the War will offer men such Bread of Life, it will be welcomed as it has never yet been. But if they only proffer stones, be they theological or ecclesiastical, such will be rejected with contempt emphasized by knowledge and embittered by suffering.

(v.) The answer of Christ's Gospel, then, to all our modern human need, is that the Biblical estimate of human nature which forms the foundation of Christian reality is in all respects ennobling and inspiring. Even in that Jewish history which constitutes the progressive revelation of the Old Testament, the dignity of man as a moral being is emphasized from the very first. His faults and follies are, indeed, portrayed with startling frankness. But they are ever and only the blemishes of a great and noble nature, with which nothing else on earth can be compared. The estimate of the Psalmist—'Thou crownest him with glory and honour; Thou hast put all things under his feet'—is never contradicted, but becomes ever more and more manifest, until it finds its culmination and gains unparalleled emphasis in the mission and message of Jesus Christ. 'How much, then, is a man of more value than a sheep!'; 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered.' These, with all that they connote, are words of His which will never pass away. When all science is hushed into a confession

of ignorance, when all philosophy is baffled by insoluble problems, and all theology exhausted in attempts to express the inexpressible, Christian reality in the Gospel of Jesus stands forth as the embodiment of comfort and hope for mankind. The first and last words of Christ's revelation of God to men are that He is 'the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.' For those who can say with the much-maligned elder brother in the story of Jesus—and there are myriads, happily, who can, when conventional artificialities are put away—'Lo, these many years do I serve thee,' there is ever the father's tender reassuring—'My dear son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.' Whilst for others—it is to be feared the vast majority—who have wandered more or less far away from Him, and spent their strength in foolishness and wrong, there is yet the hope of hopes that He is waiting for their return. It was not the conviction of sin that brought the prodigal home. It was the longing for needed comfort, and the hope of love's forgiving reception. Even so now. However truly and necessarily the sinfulness of sin is emphasized in modern civilization, men are still 'saved by hope.' That hope—the hope of the Gospel which assures men of the truth of the universal and eternal Fatherhood of God—and that alone, understood, appreciated, acted on, will save the modern world of mankind.

III. Christ

It might be said with truth that the two greatest religious questions which now include all others are, 'What is the Bible?' and 'Who is Christ?'

Certainly the latter is far too vast to be even summarily answered in few words. The only consideration which saves from presumption the brief notice of it here possible, is that the aim of these pages is neither academic nor theological, but personal and practical. It is but an attempt to bring home to the average mind some of the results of the vast transitions now proceeding, which must be faced if Christianity is to justify its high claims. The whole situation as regards belief in Christ has been so well and truly portrayed by Dr. W. L. Walker, that it will save time and space, as well as add weight to what follows, if we give to his words in quotation the heed they deserve.

> There has been much dispute over a consistent doctrine of His person, such as would account for a true humanity as well as for a real divinity, and to-day the evangelical doctrine needs to be restated in harmony with the representation of Jesus in the Gospels, and with modern thought, and so as not to be a difficulty driving men away from Christianity, but easily credible by them. We cannot force people nowadays to accept a doctrine, and it will not do to say, with Modernists, that we must simply believe in the Deity of Christ on the authority of the Church. We must have valid grounds for our faith, and nothing that we do not see to be in harmony with reason can be a vital and really fundamental belief.
>
> We have little need in these days to make it difficult for men to believe ; a great responsibility rests upon us if we do so. Of course, it must be the real Christ, and the real saving Gospel in Him, that we present. There must be no coming down from the truth in order to meet mere ' rationalizing '

tendencies. We should betray our trust if we did so. But we must be very careful to see that it is indeed the necessary truth that we are contending for. Our endeavour should be to make belief in the incarnation of God in Christ, and in the spiritual saving Gospel that flows from His person and work, not only easily credible, but also attractive, something that fits into the rest of our knowledge, and meets the deepest wants of the heart. Jesus never put a hard doctrine of incarnation between men and salvation, and we depart as far from Christ when we do so, as if we demanded their entrance into some earthly church before they could be saved.[1]

These are true and weighty words, though one knows sadly enough beforehand, that there are not a few 'evangelical stalwarts' upon whom both their truth and weight will be lost. None are so blind as those who will not see. There are numbers of believers in the churches of to-day, who are not only still living in the mid-nineteenth, if not eighteenth, century, but demand that it should be counted to them for righteousness that they do so. They must, however, be disregarded, as firmly as gently, for the sake of coming generations, and all those in this age who most need Christian reality. In the unprecedented opportunities, as well as unsettlements, which are now presenting themselves, nothing can possibly be of such moment for Christianity, as a true and valid presentation to men, by the churches, of a convincing doctrine concerning the Person and work of Christ. By that, all else stands or falls. It is acknowledged by Christian

[1] *The True Christ*, p. 79.

thinkers that the endeavour must be to preserve the substance, or 'fundamentals,' of faith, whilst seeking with wise sympathy to adapt the forms of former expression to the modern environment. Can any hint of what this involves be given in few words? Let us see. It is as necessary as helpful to make a threefold distinction. We have here (1) matters which may be said to be beyond rational or reasonable dispute. These must be assumed, however modestly, as the very pith and marrow of Christian reality in every age. (2) Conceptions more or less closely associated with the foregoing, which must be left open to the individual intelligence and conscience. (3) The great final purpose, according to Christ Himself, of all actual belief in Him and acceptance of His message. Upon each of these the organized churches will have to utter no uncertain sound, if the Christian faith is to be perpetuated, let alone prevail, in the days that are before us.

(1) When we attempt first to state the things which are most surely believed amongst us—so surely that we cannot 'proclaim the Gospel' without them—it must be acknowledged, for sheer truth's sake, that the standpoint known as 'Evangelical' differs seriously from that of the Greek, or Roman, or Anglican sections of the Catholic Church. Yet even these differences relate more to the conception and expression of the 'fundamentals' which follow, than to their definite acceptance or denial. Allowing for these differences, the substance of all Christian reality may be said to be in these main truths. (i.) The historicity of Jesus Christ, i.e. the actuality of His earthly existence, as against

all recent suggestions to the contrary. (ii.) The substantial accuracy and reliability of the New Testament account concerning Him, mainly in the Gospels, but including the incidental testimonies of certain letters of Paul and John, and the writing to the Hebrews. (iii.) The representation there given of His character as pure, noble, beautiful, and indeed sinless—though certainly not because He could not sin, but because He would not. (iv.) His specific teaching concerning a Kingdom of Heaven, which may perhaps in these days be most expressively summed up as being the exact opposite of the ideals of Nietzsche and German militarism, as well as of the murderous, unchecked competition which, under the name of 'industrialism,' has turned civilization into a ruthless battle-field. (v.) The actuality of His wondrous works or miracles, in regard to which so keen a critic as Professor Seeley wrote :—

> The fact that Christ appeared as a worker of miracles is the best attested fact in His whole biography, both by the absolute unanimity of all the witnesses, by the confirmatory circumstances, and by countless other confirmations of circumstances not likely to be invented, striking sayings inseparably connected with them, &c., in particular cases.[1]

(vi.) The manner of His death by crucifixion, under such circumstances as make it absolutely unique in the world's history, and, apart from any precise theological theory of the Atonement, a voluntary

[1] *Ecce Homo* (Cheap Edition), p. v.

yielding up of Himself to the utmost that evil could do, as a vicarious spiritual sufferer on behalf of humanity.[1] (vii.) The reality of His Resurrection and Ascension, in whatever way they may be conceived to have occurred. (viii.) The unmistakable continuity of His personal existence in a glorified nature, transcending His former bodily existence on earth. (ix.) Through this glorified existence a real, though spiritual, accessibility to the trust, the love, the soul-communing of His disciples, the wide world over. (x.) His unequivocal Lordship, as Master no less than Saviour to His followers, so that what is known as the Christian ethic can never be a matter of option, but must always be obligatory.

On each of these items volumes might be written, as indeed they have been. It is enough to state them here, as essentials to Christian faith which cannot on any terms be left out of the appeal of the churches to post-war humanity.

(2) But in the new world which is upon us, the policy of Rehoboam would fail as egregiously in regard to modern religion, as it did in relation to ancient politics. It requires no theological erudition to warrant the prophecy that if there be any such attempts to force dogmatic shibboleths upon mankind to-day as the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed exemplify, then Christianity will be left as forsaken and denuded as were Judah and Benjamin of old. And what is more, the divine sentence pronounced then—'This thing is from

[1] See note at end of this section.

Me '—would find its unmistakable echo in the yet stronger words of Jesus Himself—' Not every one who says unto Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in Heaven.' Modern Christians, in the great majority, may and will, with reverent faith, hold to the fundamental doctrine of the divine humanity of Jesus. But there must be no harsh words for Unitarians, or for 'Liberal' Theologians who cannot honestly adopt the same attitude. Still less—to reiterate for the sake of emphasis—must there be any approach to the frightful falsity which declares that ' unless a man thus think of the Trinity, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly ' —an utterly unwarranted dogmatism ; enough, if it were heeded, to drive the men of this generation headlong to atheism.

For even if, with ordinary orthodox churches, we assume the real deity of Christ, as the only conclusion to which we can honestly come in face of all that is reliable in the New Testament, yet all the learned volumes issued upon this great theme, however careful, scholarly, and reverently thorough, have ultimately to acknowledge that the ' Hypostatic Union ' remains as insoluble a mystery, as the doctrine of the Trinity, or of the Atonement. Very many Evangelical Christians will demur to the estimate of Christ's person which may be described under the general term of ' modernism '—varying from the very denial of His existence, to the reverence of an Eucken, or a Loofs, or a Tyrrell. Yet it has in the end to be openly confessed that the rational grounds for the religious acceptance of Jesus Christ as one with God in the transcendent

sense, which involves both the reality of His pre-existence and the triune conception of Deity, are incapable of exact and final expression.[1]

Take, for instance, out of the host of publications on this august theme, which may be characterized as equally modern, erudite, and sincere, such fair and worthy specimens as these :—*The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*, by Dr. Forsyth ; *Jesus*, by Professor Bossuet, of Göttingen, in the Crown Theological Library ; *Christologies, Ancient and Modern*, by Dr. W. Sanday ; *The Person of Our Lord*, by Canon C. F. Nolloth ; *The Person of Christ*, by Professor H. R. Mackintosh, in the International Theological Library ; and *Jesus—Seven Questions*, by Dr. Warschauer. We may say with good reason that, on the whole, these comprise the best statements that can be found, from the standpoint of sane modern criticism and reverent as well as rational scrutiny. Is it, then, possible from these witnesses to formulate one final doctrinal definition with which Christian reality must henceforth be identified ; and concerning which we must echo either what the Athanasian Creed affirms as to the doctrine of the Trinity, or what a later work,

[1] Mr. W. Douglas Mackenzie has well said hereupon in his able and elaborate article in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (pp. 505 to 551) :—

' Regarding the principal features of the Christological problem at the present hour, the situation is full of perplexity and difficulty for all minds which lay themselves open to the forces of their own day. And no one can write without prejudice on a question which at every point is connected with the nature of the spiritual life, and with the ever-passionate, ever-sensitive, ever-varied, and complex life of the Church.

' This great problem how the Divine and Eternal One could clothe Himself with the forms and conditions of human experience, so far even as to taste death Himself, is as a problem the climax of all preceding

professing to be specially 'evangelical,' declares concerning an exact conception of the Atonement—'the question is one on which our eternal fate depends'? There must be no hesitation or equivocation in answering plainly, that it is not possible. Thus Dr. Forsyth says:—

> To explain Christ and His final work, there were two ideas current in the early Church—His Virgin Birth and His Pre-existence. It is possible, of course, to hold both these. But the temper and tendency of our time is against the old emphasis on the former, especially on critical grounds, and more particularly because of its absence in cases where, as in St. Paul, all turns on the uniqueness of Christ's nature and origin. If, however, we relax the emphasis on that Virgin Birth, we must increase it upon the Pre-existence, as St. Paul did.

The extent to which this relaxing of 'emphasis' on the Virgin Birth has come to pass amongst thoughtful modern preachers and hearers, is greater than is generally acknowledged. If, then, for theological relief we turn to the doctrine of the Pre-existence, what does Dr. Mackintosh give us for our comfort? This:—

> In the light of these discussions we need have no hesitation in confessing that the pre-existence of Christ outstrips our faculty of conception, and that

problems. They, as it were, lead up to it. The question—How does the divine mind work in relation to any process in time or space?—is simply the vestibule of this grander problem—how the divine mind, which must have its distinctive experience of time and space, clothed itself in the conditions of human, temporal, and spatial experience, in the person of Jesus Christ.'

no theoretic refinements alter this in the very least. Not merely are we faced here by the impossibility of beholding the life of God on its inward side, which means that thought is working altogether apart from experience; but, in addition, we encounter once more the haunting and insoluble enigma of time as ultimately related to eternity. And other not less formidable difficulties remain.[1]

It is true that Canon Nolloth, before announcing his conclusion, faces the modern situation with unflinching erudition. But Bossuet's *Jesus*[2] is not so easily disposed of as he seems to imagine, and there are in our modern midst many thinkers of equal calibre and character, who will demur to the confidence of his last words.

Be that as it may, the full Christian belief, founded on the study of God's Word, and on the spiritual experience of those who hold it, guaranteed, too, by the illuminating presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, can be held with the confidence that it can be rationally accounted for, and that the keenest application of critical tests has only increased its certainty.[3]

Dr. Sanday's contribution to the solution of the mystery of Christ, in 'a tentative modern Christology,' consists of the suggestion that—

The proper seat or *locus* of whatever there is of divine in man—by whatever name we call it, immanence, indwelling, mystical union, or the

[1] p. 457. [2] Crown Theological Library.
[3] *The Person of our Lord* (Macmillan), p. 358.

like, and whatever the extent of the real experience corresponding to those names—is that part of the living organism of man which we are learning to call 'the subliminal consciousness.' . . Now it seems to me that the analogy of our human selves can at least to this extent be transferred to the Incarnate Christ. . . . The advantage of this way of conceiving of the Person of Christ is that it leaves us free to think of His life on earth as fully and frankly human, without at the same time fixing limits for it which confine it within the measures of the human; it leaves an opening which in any case must be left, by which the Deity of the Incarnate preserves its continuity with the infinitude of Godhead.[1]

So he is led on also to the conclusion that—

> The mistake made in the past has been to think of the Human and the Divine too much in contrast and opposition to each other, to think that we must needs weaken or restrict or—if we may say so, dilute—our conception of the one in order to make room for the other. On the contrary, our real duty and our real policy is to emphasize fearlessly both sides at once; our Lord Jesus Christ is at one and the same time truly human and truly divine. And the analogy of our own nature shows us, I believe, more clearly than anything else *how* this can be.[2]

Yet even a thoughtful child must see here that the mystery which baffles us is not even touched. For the one element which constitutes the difficulty is on the one side of this analogy, entirely absent. It

[1] *Christologies, Ancient and Modern*, pp. 163, 165, 166.
[2] Ibid. p. 211.

is not the divine immanence, such as may be truly predicated concerning ordinary humanity, which is in question. It is the co-existence with the truly human, in the human frame, of the pre-existent and transcendently divine Christ. There would seem to be, therefore, overwhelming reasons for heeding what Dr. Mackintosh suggests.

> If problems so baffling gather round it, the pre-temporal being of the Son cannot surely be a datum for faith—part of the message, that is, which we hold forth as evangelists, with the hope of creating faith where as yet it does not exist; it must rather be a corollary or implicate to which conscious faith gives rise.
>
> It should be clear that whether we can or cannot discriminate between elements united to form Christ's person, at least there is no admissible point of departure but the given realities of fact. Christ in the New Testament is nearer to our minds, as well as more fundamental for religion, than any prior potencies out of which He arose.[1]

This is doubtless true, but it is the yielding of theology to the Pragmatism of Christian reality. This needs to be frankly stated. For as Dr. Orchard has remarked :—

> It is one of the tragedies of Christianity that the attempt to explain Jesus has almost obscured Him. No doubt the mighty controversies which have gathered round His name are in themselves a monument to His greatness, but the monument has become His mausoleum. The strife of tongues has done for Jesus what the sepulchre could never

[1] *The Person of Christ*, p. 458.

do. Theology, which came to serve Him, has often only set the seal upon His tombstone.

I can confess with the ancient Church the doctrine that Jesus was perfect man and perfect God, if only it is understood that this is an intentional paradox which religious experience alone can solve, and if it is made clear that the terms are to be interpreted by Jesus, and not Jesus by the terms.

(3) With definite emphasis, therefore, these elements of the case, applying not only here, but throughout the whole range of Christian beliefs, must be honestly stated, rather than secretly conceded, or half-heartedly promulgated. There must be respectful room left for difference of opinion, i.e. liberty for varying conscientious convictions, in regard to all the articles of faith, however fundamental, above mentioned. The sincere and thoughtful discussion of the Person and nature of Jesus has filled numberless volumes, and will yet produce more. But no one of these is so utterly and finally true as to rule out all the rest, and make them unchristian. Quite recently a thoughtful and scholarly young minister in one of the Free Churches referred to Dr. Sanday's article in a recent number of the *Modern Churchman* as being 'really abominable.' Why? Because of its endeavour to deal honestly with Christian tenets, in the light of our present-day knowledge! The application of such an epithet to the work of such a venerable and pure-minded Christian teacher, for such reason, speaks for itself. It is, alas, not only too typical, but assuredly indicative of a spirit which will do far more to hinder than to help the Christianity of the future.

This applies especially to the estimate of the Bible, which we have considered above. But besides this, there are other important matters in regard to which the great principle enunciated by Paul as to the difficulties of his own time must once more be reiterated—' Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.' That principle has to be definitely understood and acted on, in all discussions concerning the following matters about which modern Christians are divided. The Virgin Birth; the estimate of the truth and significance of miracles; the meaning and consequences of Christ's death; the actuality of His divine-human nature; the nature of His resurrection; and the truth as to His ' Second Coming.'

In regard to all these, the plain fact is not only that they are rejected by unbelievers, but that there are the widest differences of sincere conviction amongst believers. Whatever may now be the connotation of the old terms ' orthodox ' and ' heterodox,' this at least is sure—that no man, no church, has any Christian right to assume or assert that his or its conceptions are so absolutely true, as to confer the right to unchristianize, or to condemn, those who differ. It is no part of our task here to discuss any one of these ' fundamentals.' The matter of importance is that, in regard to them all, there must be in the Christian reality of the future, as genuine advance upon the present mood of myriads of believers—especially in the ' Low Church ' section of Anglicanism, and throughout the Free Churches—as their own attitude now is nobler, and truer to Christ, than that of the Inquisitors, or some of the Puritans.

There are to-day overwhelming reasons for such an enlargement of Christian charity. Perhaps the truth which above all else now calls for unequivocal emphasis is that, according to the whole teaching of Christ Himself and the Apostles, Christianity, if it at all represents His Kingdom and purpose, exists not for show but for use; and that use primarily for this life, and only secondarily for the life to come. Of the latter we will speak again presently. For the moment, this life may well be the one great consideration. The true and final 'mission' of Jesus Christ to humanity, in which the whole significance of Christian reality must ever consist, is not the working out of a creed, but the creation of a character. Not the nearest approach to accuracy in thoughts of God, or of His doings, but the most actual likeness to God in loving obedience to Christ, and consequent treatment of each other. It is impossible to put this with more clearness and emphasis than did Paul in his letter to the Galatians. The writer evidently was not in the least afraid of being called 'controversial'—though to-day it is used as a term of reproach for many who only desire, as he did, to know and maintain the truth. This is the most controversial letter in the New Testament, and the Apostle's trumpet utters no uncertain sound upon what was the orthodoxy and heterodoxy of that day. Yet in the very midst of it, or rather as a kind of all-including summary, we find him declaring that—

> In Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love.

For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.[1]

Seeing that circumcision was the orthodoxy of that day, and the great matter of dispute, the principle he thus exalts above all creed becomes the Christian ideal for all time. The difference in this regard between the fourth century and the twentieth is, we know, immeasurable. But there is still room for no little development on these lines. The men of this age have yet before their eyes, only too often, the vision of an utterly unchristian narrowness of mind and heart, which makes creed or ecclesiastical form the text of the Gospel, and writes character with small letters in the margin. But if in future Christianity is to prevail, it will have to come—in the only sense worth real consideration—into the 'Apostolical succession'—made so unmistakable in Paul's Psalm of Love already quoted.

Right nobly did the Apostle of the eighteenth century echo that great utterance when he declared that—

> Men may die without any opinions and yet be carried into Abraham's bosom; but if we be without love, what will knowledge avail? I will not quarrel with you about opinions; only see that your heart is right with God, and that you love the Lord Jesus Christ, and walk as your Master walked, and I ask no more. I am sick of opinions; give me good and substantial religion, a humble, gentle, love of God and man.

John Wesley never preached or wrote anything more really Christian, or truly orthodox, than that.

[1] Gal. v. 6; vi. 15.

Alas! it has not been the faith and practice of Christendom. Nor is it at this hour. When Evangelical theology and advanced criticism have had their last dispute, Whittier's reminder will be more in force than ever :—

> What asks our Father of His children, save
> Justice and mercy and humility,
> A reasonable service of good deeds,
> Pure living, tenderness to human needs,
> Reverence and trust and prayer for light to see
> The Master's footprints in our daily ways?
> No knotted scourge nor sacrificial knife,
> But the calm beauty of an ordered life
> Whose every breathing is unworded praise.

For that, we see, is but an echo of Micah's great evangel quoted above—a prophetic word which Jesus Himself distinctly said He 'came not to destroy, but to complete.'

To sum up, therefore, this whole brief estimate of Christian truths in the realm of modern theology, for many, perhaps most, of those who read these pages, the transcendent Deity of Christ, together with the Triunity of the Divine nature, and the personality of the Holy Spirit as the everlasting 'Friend in need,' are all main elements of Christian faith. As such they cannot be separated from the other truths of equal import above mentioned, viz. the progressive revelation in the Bible of the universal Fatherhood of God; the vicarious self-sacrifice of Jesus as the incarnation of His love; the sinfulness of sin as thereby exhibited; the possibility of real communion with the Father on the part of all His children who have come to recognize, to appreciate, and to reciprocate His

love; the need of penitence and the welcome to reconciliation for all who have wandered away from Him. These constitute Christian reality considered theologically. But the only way in which that reality can be emphasized in modern light, or brought home to modern life, is the way of humble faith and daily practice, not hard dogmatism or acrimonious denunciation. It is the way of unshrinking openness of mind to all new knowledge, whilst seeking ever to prove in daily experience, and evince in personal character, all that is taken for true. Christian reality does not and cannot consist, for any man or any church, in blind clinging to old standards, however venerable; but in following as fearlessly as humbly, and 'in scorn of consequence,' 'whatsoever things are true.'

There is no reason whatever, either in fact or in Scripture, for assuming that all Christian truth that this age needs was known to our forefathers; or for drawing a hard-and-fast theological line at the close of the eighteenth century, any more than at the end of the first, or the middle of the fourth. It can never be too often said that 'Christianity is a life,' not a creed. Of life we know nothing save that it involves growth. The cessation of growth means death. Hence, as each man lives, apart, his own physical, intellectual, moral life, whatever his environment, so must he be his own theologian. The one inevitable and unmistakable corollary which emerges from the firm yet charitable Apostolic principle already quoted, is that in the degree in which any man is 'convinced in his own mind' that his theological views are nearest the truth, so that he can say, with Canon Nolloth—

If others shrink from drawing what we believe to be the only logical conclusion from the admitted facts, if they hesitate to call Christ Lord and God, we cannot help feeling that their position is unsatisfactory, and that a close scrutiny of their presuppositions and of their methods of work would lead to revision of their attitude—

then in that very degree he is bound to cultivate and manifest, everywhere and always, the most Christlike character. To fail in that, will be the most deadly heterodoxy of all.

This is not the occasion for any attempted discussion in detail of so vast a theme as the true theological statement of Christian doctrine concerning the death of Christ. So far as I am bound honourably to speak here in careful fullness, reference must be made to my *Christian Essentials*, pp. 63–105. But three other works may be specially mentioned as meriting thorough appreciation amidst the flood of works upon this great theme—Dr. W. N. Clarke's *Outline of Christian Theology*, pp. 316–362 ; Dr. Scott Lidgett's Fernley Lecture for 1897 on *The Spiritual Principle of the Atonement* ; and Professor W. F. Lofthouse's *Ethics and Atonement*, a work which is not nearly as well known as it ought to be. The main point to be made clear, beyond all possibility of mistake, is that Christian reality is not bound up with any one theological theory whatever. As Professor Lofthouse truly says—'It is impossible to prove any theory of the Atonement by quoting texts. Passages can be adduced with equal cogency to support the most diverse views of this great theological fact, and to destroy them. Again, there is no passage in the New Testament which contains a careful elaboration of the doctrine. Even the *locus classicus* in Rom. iii. cannot for a moment claim to be exhaustive. As pointed out above, the single yet complex view of the central figure of the Atonement is presented in ways as diverse as are the characters of the individual writers. Exactly the same is true of the Atonement itself.' But this impossibility does not absolve us from the duty, and indeed necessity, of endeavouring to think deeply and accurately upon a matter which has so much to do with all Christian reality, and consequently with the weal or woe of mankind. Dr. Magee and Dr. Horton, representing very many more, have boldly asserted that 'the New Testament gives us no theory about the Atonement.' But upon the very basis of this indefinability, they rest a claim for more substantial and significant reality. This position, if it can be made sufficiently impressive,

would seem to be what modern churches will have to come to, if they are to be more than esoteric societies in the twentieth century.

In the closing note to his valuable work Dr. Lidgett takes some exception, apparently, to this attitude. He says truly that 'the number of those who regard the reasons and nature of the Atonement as unexplained and at present inexplicable, is constantly increasing.' That was twenty years ago. The number is much greater now. Dr. Lidgett refers to Dr. Magee's attitude. But the feeling of myriads who have neither time nor disposition for theological discussion is probably as nearly expressed in his words as anywhere. He says—in his vigorous little booklet, published by Cassell, in the *Helps to Belief* series—'Texts there are in abundance setting forth the idea that in some way Christ's death has removed an obstacle to our forgiveness—an obstacle existing not on the human but on the divine side; but where are the texts which profess to explain, still less to formulate scientifically, the nature of this obstacle, and the precise manner of its removal—to tell us, that is to say, wherein consists the atoning efficacy of the death of Christ? The creeds of the Church Catholic imitate, on this great subject, the reverent silence of Scripture. They teach an atonement; but theory of atonement, God be praised, they give us none. All that we are bound to believe and defend is that there has been an atonement effected for us by the death of Christ, and that this has removed a hindrance in the way of remission of sins, other and beyond any that might exist in ourselves. But what that hindrance is, and how that death availed to remove it, we are nowhere expressly told, and we are wise if we refrain from at all attempting to define.' Such an avowal from such a man as Dr. Magee certainly merits regard. A similar expression from another well-known Anglican scholar is found in the statement of Dean Church, that 'the longer he lived the more his mind recoiled from the effort to understand how Christ bore our sins, and how He obtained their forgiveness.'

It is sometimes assumed that those who consider the rationale of the Atonement indefinable, underrate the significance of the Cross of Christ. This, however, is very far indeed from being true. Mr. Balfour's protest against the demand for explanation deserves to be repeated. 'How many persons are there who because they dislike the theories of atonement propounded, say, by Anselm, or by Grotius, or the versions of these which have imbedded themselves in the devotional literature of Western Europe, feel bound in reason to give up the doctrine itself? Because they cannot compress within the rigid limits of some semi-legal formula, a mystery which unless it were too vast for our full intellectual comprehension would surely be too narrow for our spiritual needs, the mystery itself is to be rejected. Because they cannot contrive to their satisfaction a system of theological jurisprudence which shall include redemption as a leading case, redemption is no longer to be counted among the consolations of mankind' (*Foundations of Belief*, p. 357).

The demand for definition or explanation on pain of rejection breaks

down utterly in regard to all realities. To mention only the nearest and apparently simplest, life and love. Of both these, God be thanked, we are absolutely sure. But neither admits of definition. Of life we know ultimately nothing, save that we, with other organisms, incarnate it. And certainly the love that could be defined would be but mockery. Dr. Lidgett says indeed, truly, that ' blank mystery does not move men, for their faith means insight.' But the assumption here is quite unwarranted. Most assuredly the mystery of Christ's atoning death is not ' blank ' for those who regard it as inexplicable. Its inexplicability arises from the very fact that, so far from being ' blank,' it is too full of significance to find any adequate expression in human speech. Furthermore, what is the ' insight ' that is due to faith? Is it the intellectual apprehension of such causes and reasons as dissolve away the mystery? Will any thoughtful Christian venture to affirm that? Surely faith's true insight connotes not the explanation but the appreciation of the mystery. The little child's growing apprehension and appreciation of its mother's love knows nothing of the pangs of childbirth which are the only explanation of its existence, or of the mother's attitude to it. The impenetrable mystery is that it owes everything to mother. But so far from being a blank mystery, it is at first the most sacred bond, and then develops into love's most potent life-long dynamic. Of a truth Paul had neither explanation nor theory of the Atonement when he declared that ' I have been crucified with Christ, and I myself no longer live, but Christ is living in me ; and the bodily life which now I live, I am living by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up to death on my behalf.' Other theory of the Atonement than that, no man, no Church, will ever need.

VI

CHRISTIAN REALITY AND THIS WORLD'S PROSPECT

What the world needs to-day is a religion which wins in its solitary hours of devotion the power to realize itself in the market, and the senate, and the embassy, and the home, and foreign mission field. It needs men who, inspired by a religious motive, will grapple with civic corruption and national greed and vanity, and be willing to face danger, not only to the body but to soul, in the interest of the Kingdom of God.—Dr. D. S. Cairns, *Christianity in the Modern World*, p. 309.

When we turn to the Socialist we have something to make up in our presentation of Christianity. We can show the ardent Socialist that whatever it has come to be, religion had a social origin, and in the Christian doctrine of the Godhead it has a social ideal which would satisfy the most rigid equalitarian. The Trinitarian doctrine that in the Godhead there are three persons, all equal and all one, is pure Socialism. The Christian salvation is a salvation from that very conception of self which is the cause of all our social evils.—Dr. W. E. Orchard, *Deansgate Lectures*, p. 20.

It is by the gradual growth of the Christian ideal that progress during the last hundred years has been made; and in that progress, and in the ideal that caused it, is our greatest hope for the future. But when this War is over, it must be seen more clearly and generally and pursued more rapidly, or revolution will come to throw progress back.

That spirit which in pre-Christian times and mediaeval justified slavery, justifies to-day the present social and industrial system, with its huge inequalities of wealth and position, and its hideous morass of suffering and shame at the bottom. Most of us take all this as a matter of course, as inevitable, unalterable, and avert our eyes from it, and may even persuade us that it is God's will. There it lives and festers.—Canon J. M. Wilson, *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1915, pp. 854, 856.

VI

CHRISTIAN REALITY AND THIS WORLD'S PROSPECT

IT is impossible at the present time, whatever philosophers may desire, to think and speak and act *sub specie eternitatis*. In a sense beyond the poet's thought, 'The world is too much with us' nowadays. The frightful war-calamity with which Prussianism has cursed Europe has created an unparalleled crisis in the history of nations. It may be said, with no fear of exaggeration, that nothing in the world will remain as it was before. Certainly the old Europe is gone for ever, and is, together with many other things, in such a condition of unstable equilibrium that the wisest man is he who predicts nothing. Undoubtedly what we all desire—except a number of German swashbucklers—is what Tennyson sighed for :—

> Ah, when shall all men's good
> Be each man's rule; and universal peace
> Lie like a shaft of light across the land;
> And like a lane of beams athwart the sea,
> Through all the circle of the golden year?

But the question of questions is, How shall it be brought to pass? So far as churches are the incarnation of Christian reality, they cannot but claim to supply the answer. To such a claim, it is

no relevant retort to ask why they have not prevented the horrors of this War. For to that there is always a double answer. The Christianity they represent has never been more than an approximation to reality ; and even if it had been wholly real, there can be, in the nature of things, no warrant for expecting it, through them, to be universally triumphant. If it be understood that by Christian reality we mean all the best, both divine and human, that Christ's Gospel can connote, there can come with it no more guarantee whatever that it will overcome all ill on earth, and make 'every winter change to spring,' than the assurance of the unchanging love of God is any warrant for the expectation of universal bliss hereafter. In a world of moral beings goodness cannot be compelled, even by what is termed 'omnipotence.' Made righteousness is as unthinkable as forced love.

Until, therefore, man is reduced—degraded—to the 'machine' which, from out his grave, Mark Twain declares him to be—and then nothing will matter—war cannot be prevented, either by a good God, or by good men. No absolute guarantee of permanent peace is conceivable. The utmost that can be done with moral beings is to appeal to them. Heredity and environment, we know well, are potent factors in influencing human character. But character can only come into existence when these factors are transcended. As a child's character may be largely moulded, but never made, by parental love and the law of the home, so is it with nations. Montesquieu wrote much, and truly, concerning the vast influence of climate, for every one who has travelled knows how human facts justify him All

missionary work has to take that into account. But whether we deal with the Scotchman or the West African native, the Hindu or the Malagasy, the power of appeal remains as long as humanity endures. That is really a much more encouraging prospect than any suggestion of compulsion, either from God or man. Things alone—not men—can be the objects of compulsion ; and there is no hope of moral progress in a universe of things. But the power of appeal to moral beings is at least limitless, and that is the upward way to a boundless hope. Appeal admits of both a minimum and a maximum. Certainly it is the latter which is most hopeful. For that supreme hopefulness, here and now, Christian reality must ever stand. It consists, in briefest expression, in true obedience to Christ's two Great Commands. In other words, it is the will of God—the Father as revealed in Jesus —incarnated in men. How potent that appeal can be is abundantly and incontrovertibly demonstrated in the history of Christian Foreign Missions, as pointed out above. Bishop Welldon was entirely warranted when he said in Edinburgh recently :—

Miss Gordon Cumming relates in her account of Fiji how the islands reeked with bloodshed. There was never a canoe launched in the blue Pacific waters but passed over the prostrate forms of mutilated human beings. Then two Wesleyan Missionaries landed on these islands, and within some thirty years from the date of their arrival, there was not in those islands a house but from it evening after evening the voice of prayer rose to God. In those bloodstained islands peace reigned. You say that is no result.

I reply to you, ' Match it, if you can, by any other force except the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.' I defy any man or woman to dispute, still more to deny, the significance of these facts. I say missionaries of Jesus Christ have literally converted whole regions of the world from darkness into light. Nothing but wilful ignorance can, I think, lead any man to deny the efficacy and beneficence of these missions.

We have seen above how Mr. Charles Darwin corroborated this testimony. His confirmation is not only striking, but typical of a host of others. Such an estimate, however, recalls the words of Jesus Himself at Nazareth.

> And He said to them, No doubt you will quote to Me this proverb, Physician, heal Yourself—do here also, in your own neighbourhood, all those things that we have heard have been done at Capernaum.

For we are driven to ask, Why does not the same appeal work a similar change for the better in the countries whence the missionaries come? It is by no means difficult to answer. The effects of the appeal of Christian reality, which happily never wholly ceases, in such civilized countries as Britain, Germany, America, are none the less real for being so much more difficult to estimate than in the narrow confines of a special district where good work is thrown into strongest relief by contrast with lurid evil. Very few, except the implacable opponents of everything Christian, would deny that the worth of Christian reality to civilization can be

most impressively estimated, by asking what civilization would be without it. The answer is tragically seen to-day in the attitude and deeds of Germany and her allies. For the words of her statesmen —concerning which Mr. Asquith's calm estimate, 'transparent hypocrisy,' is not one whit too strong— and the manifestoes of her Professors show that her spirit is no more Christian than that of Turkey.

But there are two other reasons for the comparative failure of Christianity to regenerate civilized society, as compared with Madagascar, or Fiji, or the South Sea Islands which so impressed Darwin. All the missionaries to those dark fields were real in their faith. This may be deliberately affirmed, without claiming for them specific perfection, or denying a very few exceptions. Moreover, there was no definite organized opposition, either to their message or their personal influence. But, in these 'highly favoured' lands, a vast proportion of professed Christianity is quite unreal; and there is unmeasured opposition which is equally clever, persistent, and increasing. These adjectives are well weighed, and they are true to the uttermost. When justice is done to these two factors, all wonder that genuinely Christian aims are not more fully accomplished, ceases. If we here affirm that the only hope for a happier Europe, and a better world, is the development of 'saints' on truly Christian lines, full well we know that not only will unbelief curl its lip in scorn, but that other authorities, civil, educational, literary, social, which may be said to be generally sympathetic, will smile with a semi-cynical denial. But why? The saint is the incarnation of holiness, and holiness is but the

technical term in Christian parlance for that ' higher-toned goodness ' which Professor Seeley so keenly appreciated. And he was Regius Professor of Modern History. True, the editor of the *Clarion* has declared, *per contra*, that ' the word " holiness " is obnoxious.' But is a mere name at any time a sensible reason for spurning a precious and potent reality? ' Holiness ' cannot possibly be more ' obnoxious ' to some Socialists, than ' Socialism ' is obnoxious to some Christians. Would this writer, then, jettison his Socialism because some who do not understand it, and therefore do not appreciate it, pronounce it ' obnoxious '? Such talk is worse than childish. For if we are to heed what this same author says in another publication issued at the same time—

> Let the last be first, and the first last; let the strong support the weak, and the great serve the small. That, it seems to me, is what we sigh for, strive for, and are ready to die for; that is what we mean when we speak or sing or dream of Socialism,[1]

not only must Christian critics own that they are wrong in denouncing such an ideal, but the writer himself must know that he is simply echoing some of Christ's own words which delineate the practical side of holiness. To denounce holiness, therefore, is, according to his own showing, to denounce Socialism.

When the saint is real, he is the hope of the world. That may be boldly said in face of all the claims and methods of politics, economics, science,

[1] *Altruism—Christ's Glorious Gospel of Love*, p. 8.

literature, and education in general. The dire War which has been upon us is an emphatic and final contradiction to the reiterated suggestions that the panacea for all human wrongs and ills is education. For no nation on earth has been so thoroughly 'educated,' on modern lines, as the nation which has not only precipitated this misery upon Europe, but has shown to a horror-stricken world that all its mental development was but the veneer of a selfish and brutal savagery. No one who is at once intelligent and honest will venture to say that the education of Germany has been Christian. Bernhardi himself strongly avows the contrary. Concerning the education which in that country is called 'Christian instruction' he says :—

> Not a word, however, suggests that the real meaning of religion—its influence, that is, on the moral conduct of man—should be adequately brought into prominence. The teacher is not urged by a single syllable to impress religious ideas upon the receptive child mind. The whole course of instruction, in conformity with regulations, deals with a formal religiosity which is quite out of touch with practical life, and if not deliberately, at least in result, renounces any attempt at moral influence. The method of instruction which is adopted in the national school is, in my opinion, hopelessly perverted.[1]

If this avowal comes from such a source, is it any wonder that one half of Germany is indifferently non-Christian, and the other half bitterly anti-Christian? That being the case, it is simple dishonesty to talk of Christianity having failed, in

[1] *Germany and the Next War*, p. 250.

not preventing the War. It is, indeed, a fair inference, *per contra*, that Christian reality would have prevented it. God only knows what saints there are in Germany. Certainly they do not surround the Kaiser. But this we know, that *they* did not make the War; *they* do not wish to prolong it; *they* cherish no hate for England now. *They* will not cherish a bitter hankering for revenge when peace is concluded.

On the other hand, it must be avowed, with equal plainness, that peace at any price is not the hall-mark of saintship. When Mr. Asquith declares that, under all the circumstances which do not need repetition—

> We shall never sheathe the sword, which we have not lightly drawn, until Belgium—and I will now add Serbia and Montenegro—recovers in full measure all and more than all that she has sacrificed; until France is adequately secured against the menace of aggression; until the rights of smaller nationalities of Europe are placed on an unassailable foundation; and until the military domination of Prussia is wholly and finally destroyed—

that determination is quite as holy, i.e. as Christianly real, as any suggestion to keep a day of intercession. For it is a genuine plea for both justice and liberty, for righteousness as well as for compassion. To fail from these would be to fall beneath the level of the Old Testament prophets; whereas it is the very *raison d'être* of the New Testament to rise above that level. Hence the Apostle's emphatic avowal that 'the Kingdom of God is not eating

and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.' The lesson is unmistakable and eternal, that righteousness must precede peace, even as peace comes before joy.

Let us, however, assume that the War is over, and that peace has been so arranged that the way is open, even though it be through wrecks and over ruins, to a fairer prospect. Let us also take for granted that Christian reality, as here understood, is growing from more to more. What has it to do with the realization of that better day when war shall be no more, and mankind shall live by mutual helpfulness instead of malice and envy? We have first to remember that the cessation of the unholy international war will mean in every case the prosecution afresh of a holy national war. All the ills that such a war must leave in its dire track will be allied in deadly potency with all previously existing wrongs, to such dread extent as will tax to the very uttermost all the best efforts of all the best men and women in every land. What, then, is to be the contribution of that Christian reality which finds its truest as well as most influential expression in holiness? In one word, it is the hallowing of sociology. To many, it is to be feared, such a phrase will be meaningless. But the real meaning is as unmistakable, as the need for it is imperative. There are in it two distinct though inseparable elements. First, the development of individual spirituality; secondly, the application of that spirituality, without flinching or evasion, to all the relations of everyday modern life.

The ideal which this connotes is quite easy to

state briefly and unequivocally. The foundation of all else in the Christian religion, as above intimated, is the universal Fatherhood of God which is predicated of all men, without distinction, by Jesus Christ. The immediate and inevitable corollary of this is the brotherhood of man—none the less real or significant for having become a hackneyed term. At present, however, the former is so imperfectly or feebly held, that the latter is much ' more honoured in the breach than in the observance.' Brotherhood, we know, connotes mutual love and helpfulness in the form of family life. Whereas the life of humanity, at the present stage of its evolution, which is represented by the ' industrialism ' of civilization, is the life of the menagerie, or the jungle. So that the notion of human brotherhood and sisterhood, as applied to the social conditions which yet obtain, is sheer fiction. It is scarcely acknowledged in theory—at all events outside Christian churches ; its realization is attempted by very few ; it is actually practised by almost none. Where white and coloured races meet, the former are mostly content to regard the latter as unalterable inferiors. Where all are ' white and free,' the lines of caste division drawn by what is termed ' social position,' are harder and more implacable even than in Eastern lands. The colossal task before Christian reality on this earthly plane is to break down all such walls of partition, on the principle enunciated by the Apostle that the true saint has to

> put on the new man which is being refashioned according to the true knowledge of what the Creator's likeness is, wherein there is no longer

any Greek or Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave or freeman; but Christ is everything, and in every one.[1]

This, of course, involves also the transformation of the social jungle where men and nations fight like beasts for the biggest prey, or even for bare existence, into the home where the weak do not go to the Nietzschean wall, but where the practical and actual motto is 'all for each, and each for all.'

The suggestion is indeed appalling in its magnitude and apparent impossibility. Certainly it is far too vast to be accomplished by any revolution of any kind. It will come, if it ever does come, only by the slow but sure path of spiritual evolution. Humanity must gradually

> Move upward, working out the beast,
> And let the ape and tiger die.

The question of questions is whether that is merely the dream of philanthropic enthusiasm, or an ideal to be surely attained. To that question, Christian reality can have but one answer. For the true saint, the 'Kingdom of Heaven' is no mere dream; it is 'the Coming Age.' A fervent public speaker has recently said that one of the things which the War has done is to 'rediscover for us heaven and hell.' What that may mean, if it be true, as to the post-mortem hereafter, may stand over for a moment. But it is to be hoped that it is true in the sense of casting ghastly light upon the hells which here and now men make for themselves and for each other, all of which not only ought to be, but may be,

[1] Col. iii. 10, 11.

transformed into heavens. Here, again, a conditional optimism finds enheartening place. Real growth, either in plants or children, does not come by jumps or flashes. It is not visible to impatient and meticulous watching. But what the days do not reveal, centuries make plain. That the enormous task of the future is not hopeless, may be learned from a keen observer whose confessed anti-Christian virulence makes him all the more weighty a witness. After defining 'Altruism' as 'Christ's glorious Gospel of love, against man's dismal science of greed,' Mr. R. Blatchford writes that—

> Love is stronger than greed, stronger than hate, stronger than any passion or motive of human nature. In the growth of love lies the hope of Socialism; in the prevalence of selfishness lies its menace and its danger. . . . We are told that this Gospel of Altruism is identical with the Gospel of Christ, and that this Gospel has been preached for eighteen centuries to deaf ears and obdurate hearts. It is a beautiful Gospel, say our practical friends, but it is futile. After eighteen centuries of pious repetition, nothing has come of it.
>
> But has nothing come of it? Almost every noble action and sweet personality in all those centuries has come of it. A very great deal of our progress has come of it. All the mercy and patience we have in the present, and *all the hope we have for the future*, have come of it. And let the day of Socialism be near or far, when that day arrives, Socialism also will have come of it.[1]

It is certainly difficult to understand how any man who can write that—the italics are ours—can go

[1] *Altruism*, p. 10.

on to say, 'I will fight Christianity with both hands as long as I live.' But it is perhaps scarcely less difficult to comprehend how apparently good and sincere people, in most of the churches, can be content to go on abusing Socialism, without seeking to know what are its true aims and methods. It may suffice here to echo the words of our faithful Bampton Lecturer already quoted, and affirm that there are reasons not a few why every Christian should be in some real sense a Socialist, and why every Socialist should be, as very many already are, genuine Christians.

'Christianity aims at making all men saints, but the Church is learning at last that a saint who is indifferent to the lives of his fellow men is probably an impostor.' So speaks Canon Stephen from Australia. But is it true? The most that can truly be said is that some in the churches—happily a growing number—are coming to see, and say, that any church or faith which does not lead to the transformation of the hells around us into heavens, here and now, can be no safe guide to any valid expectations in the hereafter. The usual reply to this from those who so persistently reiterate that the 'function of the Church is purely spiritual,' is that Christianity has always done and is doing this very thing, in the marvellous and unceasing conversion of individual sinners. No Christian social reformer is concerned to deny it. But it is only an answer by evasion to the plea that now more than ever, sociology should definitely come into the Christian programme. The mending of the 'broken earthenware' of which Mr. Harold Begbie has written, is not questioned or under-estimated

by any real Christian. But it is immeasurably far from covering the whole case of the modern need, if to any serious extent civilization is to be Christianized. There is not only—if we, under protest, employ the same figure—the broken china to be considered, but something very much wiser and better to be contemplated, viz. the prevention of breakage, which is vastly more important than the possibility of mending what is broken.

The time has come to proclaim definitely 'upon the house-tops,' in spite of any regard for familiar phrases, that it is simply untrue, when we are told that Christianity and the churches have 'nothing to do but to save souls.' Nor is it any reply to assert that the 'soul is the man himself.' For each man is not only an indescribably complex entity, whose physical and intellectual parts are quite as real as the moral and spiritual, but he is also a gregarious animal, and cannot be fairly or truthfully considered apart from his social environment. The Gospel of Jesus does not contemplate a human being as marooned on some desolate island.[1] The real situation at present is well expressed by Professor Hall, of New York, and it is true for both sides of the Atlantic :—

> The cry is going up from many hearts—'Show us the Father.' There are weary and rebellious

[1] Paul reckoned clearly enough with environment, in dealing with the Corinthians—'I wrote to you in that letter that you were not to associate with fornicators; not that in this world you are to keep wholly aloof from such, any more than from people who are avaricious and greedy of gain, or worshippers of idols. For that would mean that you would be compelled to go out of the world altogether' (1 Cor. v. 9, 10).

working men who are being taught, day in and day out, that there is no God, that the churches are fooling them, that the ministry is a selfish, money-making, cowardly, class institution, and that the only way out is to overthrow all religion and abandon all churches. How shall we meet this attack? Shall we scorn the cry and make no response to the complaint? If we do, we are lost. God will raise up other and more religious forces to represent Him. Rather let us find out how far we have given excuse for the attack by misrepresentations of God. Let us learn to set Christ forth as we have seen Him, giving His life for the brethren.[1]

How world-wide are the questions involved, is witnessed still further by Canon Stephen, speaking for Australia :—

As a whole, the mass of workers may be said to keep aloof from organized Christian bodies. This is shown not only by their absence from church services, but by the fact that, in their political and social struggles, the help of any branch of the Church is seldom asked for, and the help that is offered is regarded with disfavour and suspicion. The working classes welcome the social doctrines of Christianity. They aim at the justice, the liberty, the brotherhood, which would result from Christian life. But they have no use for the Christian Church.[2]

If it be asked, Why not? the true and sufficient reply is not any mere reference to animal indifference,

[1] *Social Solutions*, p. 366.
[2] *Democracy and Character*, p. 162.

or moral depravity. We shall do well to listen a little more to this honest witness :—

The attitude of the Church towards labour movements in the past is another cause of the attitude of labour towards the Church. The working man reads the history of the greater part of last century, and he looks in vain for evidence of ecclesiastical sympathy with his aspirations or his struggles. The Reform Bills were not blessed by the Bishops. Joseph Arch was denounced. Not only the methods but the aims of Chartism were preached against. Trade Unions found few advocates. Even Factory Acts had not a tithe of the ecclesiastical support which they deserved. And all these movements originated outside the Church, and asked only, and asked vainly, for her sympathy. Where are the social reforms due to the Church as an organized body—movements in favour of justice, or freedom, or humanity? We may, of course, point to splendid examples of individual teachers who advocated reform with all their heart and soul. But the names of such men as Maurice and Kingsley only make more noticeable the apathy of the whole body. The working man may not unreasonably say—Here is a Church which teaches the duty of justice, and yet made no effort to secure justice in social relations ; which teaches that love is the fundamental virtue, and yet allowed a system of absolutely selfish competition to be maintained without protest ; which teaches brotherhood, but says not a word against exclusive privilege and monopolies ; which teaches that all men are essentially equal, and yet acquiesces in a system which makes one class continually dependent upon another.[1]

[1] *Democracy and Character*, p. 164.

So far as regards facts, much may perhaps be said in mitigation of such a general indictment. It is also manifest, beyond contradiction, that a new spirit has been working since the time of the Christian Socialists of Kingsley's day, and is coming into power throughout the churches more and more each year. The fact that a conservative and highly organized body like the Wesleyan Methodist Church has now a well-recognized Union for Social Service, maintained by sober enthusiasts, holding a definite public assembly at each annual Conference and multiplying lectures, study circles, appeals of all kinds, throughout the year, speaks for itself. Equally pronounced in the application of spiritual principles to social needs and responsibilities, is the attitude of many noble leaders in the Anglican Church ; nor are there wanting illustrious examples of the same spirit in all the Free Churches. But it would be a mistake to conclude from these developments that the Christian Church, as a whole, is either alive to the relation of the genuine Gospel of Jesus to the needs of humanity, or awake to the gravity of the modern situation. Yet one more paragraph from our frank American witness merits quoting, for the very reason that its suggestions are far more likely to be regarded as unspiritual than endorsed by the average Christian pulpit of to-day. Says Professor Hall :—

> The Church of the living God has a serious responsibility, What are we doing to make men citizens of the kingdom of God on earth? Men cannot be children of His kingdom one day in the week, and beasts of prey, each seeking only his own, the other six days. Men cannot live for

ecclesiastical purposes in holy fellowship and brotherly co-operation on Sunday, and fly at one another's property in competitive struggle, to the business death of the weaker, on Monday. The unreality of much preaching is now dawning on many minds, both in pew and pulpit. The reasonable man does not expect the pulpit to guide him in the details of his business, or his politics. We are adult men and women, and would and should resent interference with our moral autonomy. We do, however, ask that the Christian pulpit stand for definite, clear-cut, moral, and religious principles, which will enable us to organize the details of our life to conform to the hope of the heart of Jesus Christ.[1]

It has been said by a competent authority that there are more than fifty definite social questions which must emerge from the present War. Their enumeration and discussion will be found elsewhere. The one consideration which it is desired to make emphatic here is that, if Christianity is to endure, let alone leaven the modern world, it will have to enter into all such discussion more definitely, more openly, more strenuously, than it has ever yet done, alike in pulpit and on platform. For pressing reasons, both of mind and heart, let us think yet again for a moment—in addition to what has been said above—of one phase only of coming difficulties. When the infernal slaughter now proceeding comes at last to an end, the relics of the heroic army which has stood between us and the curse of Prussian militarism will come home. In spite of all losses, there will be a mighty host of them—probably more

[1] *Social Solutions*, p. 10.

than two millions. They will have to be welcomed. Not with a mad and foolish 'mafficking,' but with the chastened glory of sympathy and honour. To be real, these must be practical. To be practical, they must be both personal and national. The injured—especially the host, alas, of the permanently injured—to whom life can never be again what it was before this hell was let loose, must be tenderly cared for. Grateful provision must be made for the numberless widows and orphans whose loved ones gave all they had, and left nothing behind them.

But there will still be a vast number of able-bodied men left who, having fought a good fight yonder, have a right to expect that at least an honourable chance shall be given them to make life worth living for their dearest who welcome them home. How much sooner that is said than done, every business man will know too well. When the hellish, though just now inevitable, demand for munitions is past, and the wit of man finds a worthier field for its marvellous activities than providing the means for wholesale destruction, there will of necessity arise endless complexities of readjustment, in all kinds of industry. Now, no sane social reformer will call upon churches to become political or economic debating clubs, though that slander does sometimes emanate from Christian quarters. What is asked, in the name of a true Gospel, and what will have to be forthcoming if Christianity is to be anything more than an esoteric society, is such sympathy as—if our written Gospels are at all reliable—we do know Christ Himself would have, for all who are ground under the heel of present-day ruthless competition. That sympathy will have to take

shape in many forms. It will mean careful study on the preacher's part, so that he may be able to guide where guidance is sorely needed. It will mean willingness to learn, on the part of congregations; to do something more, in earnest reading and thinking, than simply repeat 'the old, old story,' however true and precious that is in itself. There will have to be protests, in Christ's name, against manifest social injustices and wrongs [1]; pleas, also in His name, for greater fairness in the distribution of life's possible comforts and enjoyments; demands that all flagrant violations of Christian brotherhood should be ended; the honest application of Christian principles to daily actualities in business; the inclusion of life's manifest necessities in the Gospel programme. All this involves no cessation in the prime appeal of Christianity to the individual, or in the demanding 'the utmost for

[1] How long will religious conservatism hide from the 'common people' the real force and unmeasured tenderness of His own declaration (see Matt. xii. 20, Luke iv. 18), 'The bruised reed shall He not break'—'To set at liberty them that are bruised,' when every student knows well that 'bruised,' in to-day's language, is no equivalent at all either for the prophet's word in Hebrew or the evangelist's in Greek? The pitifulness of the condition of myriads, and the tenderness of the sympathy of God, are utterly lost for the ordinary reader or hearer. Even Dr. Moffatt, than whom no one knows better, is content—in Matt. xii.—to sacrifice truth to sound. So, too, the *Twentieth-Century New Testament*. Happily, Dr. Weymouth—whom every intelligent Christian unacquainted with Greek should constantly consult—does not trifle with the truth after this fashion, but rightly renders—'A crushed reed He will not utterly break'—'To send away free those whom tyranny has crushed.' Modern men and women will not forsake the Christian Church for a trifle; they can bear 'bruises' with equanimity. But when they are being crushed by a selfish and pitiless 'industrialism,' whilst the churches pass on like the priest and Levite in the parable, unmoved, it is small wonder that the working class as a whole are repelled rather than attracted, and avow that Christianity has turned away from Christ.

the highest' from every disciple. It comes, in the end, just to the acknowledgement that every man is but a unit in a community, and that environment must be honestly reckoned with. Congregations hear often enough—not too often—of the influence of a man on his environment. They must be led to think more of the influence of his environment upon the man.

We are often told by those who deeply sympathize, that the men who for weary weeks have faced death hourly in the trenches will come back with a sobered, chastened conception of life and duty. It is probably true, on the whole. But not more true than that they will, on their return, no longer be content with industrial tyrannies in their daily life; nor with childish platitudes in religion. They will ask for 'the bread of life,' in every sense. If the churches offer them merely traditional stones on Sunday, and the ashes of selfish social customs through the week, they will assuredly turn in other directions for comfort and hope. That many who will return with the honours of war are far from saints, may be conceded. As also that, from the Christian standpoint, modern populations are sinful, and sorely need to be 'soundly converted.' But it is no less true that, from the same standpoint, they need not only conversion, but Christlike sympathy, and brotherly, sisterly love. Do the churches really believe, and will they therefore act upon, the Christian ideal of love which, avowedly, they so much admire? At all events the great lesson of the future for a living Christianity—whatever becomes of creeds, and standards, and theological definitions—is to learn and teach that there

is no necessary discord whatever between the truly spiritual and the really practical; between individual saintship and social reform.[1] The churches of the future must unite to affirm, before the whole modern world, that the love of God for men, as Jesus reveals Him, is as real now as it will ever be hereafter; and that, therefore, it is as truly an essential part of the Gospel to bring justice, freedom, health, comfort, gladness, into human lives during their present earthly conflict, as to get men spiritually converted and give them a good hope beyond the grave. If the churches fail to do that, Christianity is doomed to dwindle to a mere coterie of pietists; and He who gave His disciples with such emphasis the Second Great Command, will but say to them—'Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?'

This section ought not perhaps to close without some reference to the attitude of not a few sincere believers who look for the solution of all social problems, as well as the ending of all earth's sins and sorrows, in a cataclysmic Second Coming of Christ. It is well known to every student, that during recent years much more attention has been

[1] All who desire a beautiful and impressive illustration of this, will find it in the life of the late Dr. W. B. Paton, of Nottingham, as published by his son. But far better than to read this is to have known him personally, as the present writer was privileged to have done, and to be at once comforted by his tenderness of heart, humiliated by his never-failing goodness, and amazed at the unbounded scope of his untiring social sympathies. One is awe-struck with the wonder what would be the effect upon the modern world, if 'all who profess and call themselves Christians' were such as he, and one's heart persists in asking why such men should ever die, in a world like this.

given to what is termed the 'apocalyptic' element in the New Testament. It is also too plain to need description, that all kinds of popular religious appeals in regard to a coming Millennium have multiplied, along with a profusion of attempts to discover, in the Books of Daniel and Revelation, predictions of the present and future state of Europe. The whole theme appears to have a peculiar fascination for certain types of mind, though it is, in almost every case, based upon discarded theories of inspiration. So far as scientific research—mostly German—is concerned, it would be impossible, even if desirable, to enter into detailed examination here. Schweitzer's elaborate *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, and Weinel's erudite historical summary in *Jesus in the Nineteenth Century and After*, may well serve to demonstrate how vast has been the labour expended in this direction. They also show, taken in connexion with many other works, how utterly futile it is either to think of dismissing the subject as unimportant, or of finding some one clear and final solution. Some impressive words, however, of Professor Burkitt, in his preface to Schweitzer, may well provide a text upon which to base all that is here relevant or necessary.

Whatever we may think of Dr. Schweitzer's solution, or that of his opponents, we, too, have to reckon with the Son of Man who was expected to come before the Apostles had gone over the cities of Israel; the Son of Man who would come in His kingdom before some that heard our Lord speak should taste death; the Son of Man who came to give His life a ransom for many; whom

they would see hereafter coming with the clouds of heaven. Who is this Son of Man?

We have to learn, as the Church in the second century had to learn, that the end is not yet, that New Jerusalem, like all other objects of sense, is an image of the truth rather than the truth itself. But at least we are beginning to see that the apocalyptic vision, the New Age which God is to bring in, is no mere embroidery of Christianity, but the heart of its enthusiasm. And therefore the expectations of vindication and judgement to come, the imagery of the Messianic feast, the 'other-worldliness' against which so many eloquent words were said in the nineteenth century, are not to be regarded as regrettable accretions foisted on by superstition to the pure morality of the original Gospel. These ideas are the Christian Hope; to be allegorized and spiritualized by us for our own use whenever necessary, but not to be given up so long as we remain Christians at all.[1]

These are weighty and true words, especially in their identification of the 'Second Coming' of Christ with the New Age. Yet even here, again, occurs the familiar phrase which every Christian writer seems to think it is his duty to weave in, whatever pattern he has in hand—'Which God is to bring in.' But it is not true. Be our reverence for God ever so deep, and our respect for this writer ever so real, it is false to say that the New Age is for 'God to bring in.' The immediate reply would necessarily be a question as tragic as resistless. If all depends on God, why, in the name of all that

[1] Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, preface, p. vii.

is pitiful and holy, has He not brought it in long ago? Or at least before August, 1914, to save all these myriads of worthy and precious young lives. The whole case is well and truly illustrated by the difference between the Jacobean Version and the Revised—in one important New Testament appeal—which may be specially also commended to the attention of those preachers who are reported as saying, occasionally, that it 'does not matter' which Version is read in public, the true or the untrue. In the older Version we read, for Acts iii. 19:—

> Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, *when the times of refreshing shall come* from the presence of the Lord.

This, surely enough, does intimate that the Christian Church may well wait for the times of refreshing 'which God is to bring in.' And it has undoubtedly formed the firm basis on which multitudes of believers have rested their hopes. But it is neither what the Apostles said, nor what the whole Gospel of Christ enjoins. The truth is plain when what is now accurately given to English readers is laid to heart:—

> Repent ye, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that *so there may come* seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

It is not too much to say that the whole vast difference between true and false Millennial theories is incandescent in this correction of a downright

blunder on the part of the revisers of 1611. What, then, does it involve, and what may we take, in all thoughtful sincerity, to be the prospect herein for Christian reality? At the very least this, that the better day—call it the Second Coming, the Millennium, the Golden Age, or what we will—is not waiting for God, but for men; that it is to be ushered in not by some celestial cataclysm, but by the blotting out of the sins of Christendom. Ordinary believers who earnestly desire the truth, but are prevented by daily duties from prolonged discussion, and are perplexed by apocalyptic 'passages' about which hosts of irreconcilable opinions are in print, wearied by endless logomachies, and nauseated by the superficial, if not sinister, delusions of Millennial Dawners, may be most wisely and helpfully referred to the calm, thoughtful, reverent, but candid statement of Dr. W. N. Clarke in his invaluable *Outline of Christian Theology.*[1] Than this there is, in brief form, no more truthful summary extant. What here follows, though quite independently arrived at through years of consideration, is little more than a résumé of what this noble teacher—now gone to his reward—has set forth as wisely as succinctly.

The language of Jesus in all His teachings was necessarily that of His age. That age was steeped in apocalyptic thoughts and expectations. Partly for that reason, partly from their own ignorance, the earliest disciples interpreted—or misinterpreted—Christ's meaning, according to their own thoughts. So there grew up amongst them the general expectation of an immediate cataclysmic return of their

[1] pp. 436-448.

glorified Lord, in concrete personality. The actuality and extent of this expectation is manifest in the earlier letters of the Apostle Paul, especially those first sent to the Thessalonians and the Corinthians. But even to his mind, as well as to that of his contemporaries, it became manifest that they were mistaken. In that way their Lord did not come, and—in spite of the perpetuation of the mistaken expectation by many others—He has not come since. Nor is there any sign of His so coming. But the fall of Jerusalem, with all its direful negative significance, did come.[1] And after that dreadful day, came our Fourth Gospel. This shows that the writer has learned through the concrete disappointment to appreciate the spiritual actuality, and to regard the wondrous happenings of Pentecost, not as a transient crisis in the history of the infant Church, but as the veritable dawn of the promised coming of the living Christ, in that ever-growing kingdom of the truth for which He witnessed so unequivocally before Pilate. But here Dr. Clarke's own words cannot be improved upon.

A spiritual advent, though it may be introduced by a striking event, is not itself an event, but a process. The coming that the Fourth Gospel describes is a perpetual advent, in which Christ comes ever more fully into the life of the world—and this is the coming that has actually occurred and is yet occurring. . . . Thus the two fulfilments of the first age promise more, and indicate that the real coming of Christ is not an event, by itself,

[1] The reader who desires to pursue the subject will find much to consider suggested in Dr. Stuart Russell's *Parousia*, or the shorter but able statement by Mr. E. Hampden Cook entitled *The Christ Has Come*.

but a spiritual process, long ago begun and still continuing.[1]

One is, indeed, utterly at a loss to know what some sincere believers mean, or desire, either in a New Age, or the Millennium of which they so rapturously speak. Most assuredly it cannot be correlated with the nobler developments—and there are very many—of the present age, or with the undeniable and potent actualities of the modern world. All that one can infer that they imagine is some nebulous dismissal of all that humanity now represents and tends to realize, along with the introduction of an indefinable and impracticable mixture of mysticism and ecclesiasticism. It is small wonder that such an Elysium makes but feeble appeal to the mind of to-day. But if, instead of that unthinkable Utopia, there were cultivated the vision of an equally sublime and practical fulfilment of the suggestion in Christ's pattern of prayer—'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in heaven'—so that the New Age should mean the time, even for this world and for this very human nature, when all men's good should be each man's aim, when each man and woman and child should be endowed with all the means of happy nobility that this life makes possible, then 'the coming of Christ' would be no mere pious mirage of the desert, but an actual and immeasurable oasis, brighter as well as fuller than the highest dreams of social evolution. In that light this true summary becomes unspeakably enheartening:—

> Christ's coming was not accomplished in any one event. In reality, the event in which it was

[1] p. 443.

announced and introduced, was the gift of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost; and its first great providential accompaniment in history was the overthrow of Jerusalem. But His coming is not an event; it is a process that includes innumerable events, a perpetual advance of Christ in the activity of His kingdom. It has continued until now, and is still moving on. Christ came long ago, but He is truly the coming One, for He is still coming, and is yet to come.

No visible return of Christ to the earth is to be expected, but rather the long and steady advance of His spiritual kingdom. The expectation of a single dramatic event corresponds to the Jewish doctrine of the nature of the Kingdom, but not to the Christian.[1]

But it is no more reassuring than it is emphatically expressive of the very essence of Christian reality for the rising generation. One other word from this wise teacher is equally significant. It is but the very mild putting of what might, only too truly, be couched in terms of severe indictment and solemn warning.

Christianity has by no means been the friend to the family, to the nation, to commerce, to education, and to the common social life of man

[1] p. 444. It may not be unhelpful to note how a valid analogy to the real coming of Christ is found in the ordinary speech which so often embodies a true vision. When—alike in politics, science, or religion—general expectation fastens upon a certain individual as 'the coming man,' what is meant? Certainly not the spectacular flashing out of any precise event, but the larger development of qualities of character which have already made their mark, but will sooner or later find wider scope and farther-reaching potency. It is a true instinct which has coined the phrase, and it bears well-warranted sublimer application to the peerless character and immeasurable influence of the 'Son of Man.'

that it might have been, if Christ had been recognized as the present reigning Lord, whose kingdom is a present rule of spiritual forces for the promotion of holiness and love. The present need is the need of living faith and love to perceive the present Lord.[1]

That He is coming, there is no room to doubt, for all whose eyes are open. No man at once sane and sensible would now wish, in spite of all the tragedy upon us, to be living in 1816 instead of this year of grace. The two great uncertainties of the future which no man can solve, and no prophecy offers to make clear for us, are of priceless value when rightly apprehended, as stimulants to all that is truest to our Lord and most helpful to His kingdom. The questions are as innocent as they are irrepressible—When will His Coming be completed? And will it then embrace all humanity? We do not know, nor can any prophet tell us. But we do know that 'there shall never be one lost good.' Not even 'a cup of cold water, given to a little child in a disciple's name,' shall 'miss its reward.' We have all the knowledge we need to enable us to do our part with fidelity and courage. Certainly there is no more hope that a Golden Age on earth will ever come through arm-chair piety, or mere mystic raptures, than there is that after death we may look for universal blessedness, through an unthinkable compulsory potency of love divine. For the dim hereafter we must wait, though we may hope to the uttermost. But for the perpetuation of Christ's coming which will bring the noblest New Age for

[1] p. 445.

humanity here, those who believe in Him must work. Christian reality, in face of all earth's possible future, is most truly and sublimely represented in the Apostle's trio :—

> We are always giving thanks to God for all of you, bearing you in mind whenever we pray, ceaselessly remembering your work of faith, your labour of love, your patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of our God and Father.[1]

Hence, the only Millennium which deserves a Christian thought, or will secure the attention of this age, is that which waits, not for a spectacular revolution which 'God is to bring in,' but for the sure though slow evolution of His Kingdom of justice and peace and joy through the incarnation of these three elements of Christian reality—faith, love, hope—in 'all who profess and call themselves Christians.'

[1] 1 Thess. i. 2, 3.

VII

CHRISTIAN REALITY—FOR THE WORLD TO COME

It is characteristic of man that he stands at the parting of the ways, and under the influence of both physical ills and spiritual ideals is led eventually to conclude that he has no abiding city here, and to seek a city yet to come. Meanwhile the dimensions that circumscribe this spatial and temporal world afford us no sure clue to the wider dimensions of that more spiritual world beyond; nor do they enable us to conjecture how the two are connected or how the transition is to be made. But none the less our hold on those higher spiritual ideals leads us to believe in God, and forces us to think we were not made to die.—*The Realm of Ends*, Dr. James Ward, p. 440.

It is a question of much interest whether Christian faith involves any particular belief respecting the destiny of those who persist in hostility to God. If the doctrine of verbal inspiration is gone, and we no longer feel obliged to give a place to every isolated Bible statement, it may be contended that the gaze of faith is bent solely on the Christian prospect, and that about everything outside the pencil of light cast by Jesus and visible only to His followers, it must be wholly agnostic. In the main I should hold this contention is sound. . . . The positive knowledge available for the believing mind in regard to the obstinately wicked may perhaps be put summarily as follows:—It will be evil for those that are evil, as long as their evilness remains. If God be the Power whom we meet in Jesus, fixed opposition to His will must, while it lasts, entail suffering. This is true if the next life has a moral constitution.

Thus we return to the note struck at the outset, a note of nearly complete agnosticism. Sin, while any sin remains, entails suffering and exclusion, for we worship One with whom evil cannot dwell. Whether it will or will not remain for ever, we cannot know; nor is there reason to think that on earth we ever shall know. No one certainly is in a position to affirm that there must be those who eternally remain unsaved. This would be much more than to admit the possibility of eternal sin; it would plant intrinsic moral dualism at the heart of things.—*Immortality and the Future*, Dr. H. R. Mackintosh, pp. 195, 210.

VII

CHRISTIAN REALITY—FOR THE WORLD TO COME

When all that can be attempted in this life, for good or ill, is accomplished, there remains the inevitableness of death. All men acknowledge this, though they behave so differently in regard to it. Whatever modern materialism may say, human nature, especially in its worthiest moods, revolts against the notion that 'death ends all,' and believes more or less definitely in a life to come.[1] Certainly the Christian appeal to humanity, modern as well as ancient, assumes this much, and does not hesitate to teach that—'It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgement.' Only downright unbelief will question this; and in so doing it has all noblest human instincts against it. Nor can either science or philosophy put any legitimate veto on such expectation. The New Testament is unmistakable in its testimony, whilst modern psychical research has done decidedly more than is generally known, to demonstrate the reality of personal continuity after death. How real, and indeed growing, is the modern human interest in

[1] Seeing that it is only a summary of the case which is either possible or needed here, I must refer the reader for fuller statement to the chapter on 'Immortality' in my *Haeckel's Monism False*, and the concluding chapter on 'The Christian Doctrine of the Hereafter' in my *Christian Essentials* (C. H. Kelly).

the post-mortem future, becomes increasingly manifest; not only by the earnestness with which Spiritism is cultivated as a religion, but also by the general development of 'occult' inquiry in many ways.

What, then, has Christianity—the modern Christian reality here contemplated—to say to the coming age on this great theme? It must say something, or mankind will assuredly turn elsewhere for answers to their cravings, assurance against their fears, reasons for their hopes; most of all at the present juncture. For besides the never-ceasing fret of the human heart for loved ones apparently lost, and the bewilderment which comes to all honest minds in presence of seemingly indiscriminate suffering and frequent 'premature' deaths, we have to face that 'roll of honour'—i.e. of tragedy—which the colossal European calamity has necessitated, and which is yet, alas, far from complete. The overwhelming question stares us in the face, as to what has become of those who, a few months ago, were with us in health and strength and all the promise of youth, and now are gone from our midst for ever. In this matter all belligerents are one. Bitter as cannot but be our solemn protest that it is to Germany that Europe and Britain owe this awful holocaust, we know that for them, as for ourselves, there is untold anguish in the query, 'What are we to think of our dead?'

The question is irrepressible, although unbelief has not failed to taunt Christian faith with having in the past played upon the superstitious fears of men, to a gruesome and mischievous extent, by advocating doctrines which were as repulsive to

all that is best in human nature, as unworthy of the Divine Father whom Jesus proclaimed. There has been, alas, only too much truth in the indictment. It were a pitiful task indeed to recount the awful crudities and loathsome horrors which have been—mostly, though not only, by Rome—associated with a Christian doctrine of Hell. Scarcely less repellent have been some suggestions concerning Heaven. It would be simple dishonesty to deny the facts. The aversion of ordinary thoughtful men, and the derision of modern unbelief, have been too often deserved. The past must be left to its own judgement. Even yet, in some quarters, it is declared that the reason for much modern religious indifference is the scanty reference to 'eternal torments,' and 'the wrath to come,' in the ordinary preaching of to-day. It is enough to reply that if these great themes were handled as they used to be, the modern attitude would cease to be indifferent, and would become such a human revolt as would seal the fate of Christianity for all the future.

That a great and abiding change has come over modern Christendom in these respects, is not only true, but matter for profound thankfulness, from whatever point it be viewed. Our fathers were sincere beyond question, and taught the best they knew. But they were doubly mistaken. First, in the false theory of inspiration which led them to treat the Bible wrongfully; and secondly, by their scanty knowledge of the universe, which allowed them to think that they knew a great deal more of the nature and ways of God, than is possible to mortal minds. The great gains of the last

half-century in Christian doctrine as to the hereafter, have been truth and humility. A modern thoughtful preacher has well said hereupon :—

> Can it be settled, then? If these words do not decide the matter, is there any possibility of arriving at a definite conclusion at all? In reply to that question I might ask—Is it necessary to arrive at a definite conclusion? Suppose that God has determined to leave the question in the dark shadow of uncertainty, have we any right to complain? And considering how many things there are the knowledge of which is denied to us, can we wonder if this question is left unanswered? [1]

What the modern world needs hereupon is something from Christian churches which, in view of all the struggle of life, and especially the direful tragedy of this War, will comfort human hearts, and give them gracious hopes for all that hidden future beyond the grave, whilst at the same time true to the whole New Testament, in its representation of the solemnity of moral evil, and the grave responsibilities of our present existence. To meet this need fairly and fully, does undoubtedly necessitate the reconsideration of many portions of the New Testament which have been misquoted or misunderstood,[2] along with the definite dismissal of

[1] *Man the Glory of God*, S. T. Bosward, B.A. (Horace Marshall), p. 144, a small volume which, with unpretentious lucidity, exhibits a true and wise Christian modernism in a most worthy spirit.

[2] Probably no more crucial instance can be given than the oft-quoted words in Matt. xxv. 46, which have been alleged again and again in support of the popular doctrine of everlasting punishment, though really rendering it no support whatever. One consideration alone is sufficient to show this. All ordinary evangelical doctrine agrees that faith in Christ is, in some form, the way of salvation. But this is never

unwarranted phrases or conceptions, and the substitution of what is really true both to God and to ourselves. It may possibly startle some to be told that such expressions as 'going to heaven,' 'going to hell,' do not worthily represent the Christian faith; but a very little honest thought will show them how much more the Gospel of Jesus means than such phrases convey. Or again, that the New Testament phrase 'the day of judgement' does not point to some one spectacular, absolutely incredible event, but to the judgement which inevitably occurs when each moral being passes hence, to give account of his earthly stewardship.[1] Hereupon Dr. W. N. Clarke has said, with his usual lucidity, that—

> The value of the expectation of a coming judgement of God upon our lives does not reside in any conception that we may form of the time, the

even mentioned in these words from Matthew. The decision of the judge there, is said to turn purely and solely upon philanthropy. So that Mr. Blatchford, or Mr. J. M. Robertson, who utterly reject Christ, but whose philanthropy is beyond question, would be welcomed to 'eternal life' and many most pious Christian mystics sent to 'eternal punishment.' The impossibility, moreover, of any such absolute division of humanity into just two, and only two classes, must manifest itself to honest thought. The truth is, as Dr. W. N. Clarke has well said, 'This great passage does not refer exclusively to any single event, but sets forth the principle on which Christ's judgement must proceed, whether to-day or at the end of life, or on any day whatever, in any age or world. The test of judgement corresponds to the nature of the kingdom, and the nature of the kingdom corresponds to the nature of the King.'

[1] A brief reference to any good Concordance shows how often and in how many ways the word 'day' occurs in both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures—where there is no possible application of it to a strictly limited or even definite event. It connotes a timeless time and an indefinable certainty. For full discussion of the symbolic significance of the many passages in the New Testament, reference must be made to Clarke, Russell, Schweitzer, Hampden Cook, and other writers.

scene, or the manner of that judgement. It resides in our sense of the certainty and moral necessity of the coming judgement, and in the intelligibleness of its significance.[1]

And more. If the Christian doctrine of the last things is to be of real moral force, for the saddened and chastened, but quickened generations, that will arise after the clearing of the atmosphere by war's awful storm, it will have to be freed from confusions as well as purged of errors. Measureless superstitions, gruesome falsities, and sacerdotal tyrannies, have been based upon a doctrine of Purgatory. In these respects Dante may be fine literature, but it is coarse and cruel theology. Volumes whose name is 'legion' have been written upon the 'Intermediate State,' when the time and toil would have been far better spent in such service as Matt. xxv. eulogizes. When the Christian doctrine of resurrection and judgement is rightly interpreted, in the light we now possess, all these clouds of soul-asphyxiating mists disappear. In the further words of the writer just quoted:—

In simple and intelligible order a man goes from his life here to his life beyond, and enters at once upon its realities, not to be called back after ages have passed, to be assigned to the destiny upon which he has already entered. The doctrine of an intermediate state between death and resurrection has occasioned many perplexities, and the doctrine of a sleep of the soul during that period has been accepted by many as a relief from them. But no such relief is needed, and no such doctrine

[1] *Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 465.

is possible, if we think of a man as going at once to his judgement and his destiny. Of course, all perplexities about the intermediate state vanish, if we drop the idea of such a state.[1]

'To his destiny.' Assuming that both divine love and righteousness are equally operative, in the realm in which each moral being finds himself when he passes hence, is that destiny immutable, so that neither can the good ever fall back, nor the bad ever repent? Upon this also, volumes without number have been written. If the same energy had been spent upon helping goodness and overcoming badness in this life, it would have been infinitely better for all concerned. The plain and unevasive answer to that query, which the people of to-day have a right to expect from their Christian teachers, is that we do not definitely know. Our fathers thought they did know, and like honest men they said so. We know more than they, and so herein, with equal honesty, we own that we know less. Scripture, the universe, ourselves, are all immeasurably larger, deeper, more complex, to us than to them. We emulate, therefore, all that was best in them, when we hesitate where they were sure.

In the summary which alone is here attempted, the solemn call of Christianity upon modern humanity, in view of after-death realities, to forsake evil and turn now to good, at Christ's invitation and warning, must have in it these three main notes.

(1) *The continuity of personality*, with all that that involves of freedom and contingency. From the Christian standpoint, there is nothing whatever

[1] *Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 466.

in death to reduce a moral being to an automaton. Dr. Clarke has said not one whit too strongly that—

> The present tendency of Christian thought is towards the recognition of greater reality and moral freedom in the other life, and thus towards the possibility of moral change.

(2) *The humility* which ought ever to characterize our best efforts after truth, in matters which are so far beyond our present powers. The case here can never be better put than by the late Dr. W. B. Pope :—

> Undoubtedly the whole tenor of the New Testament teaches us that as there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, all who are not saved must reject that name directly proposed to them. From this conclusion, neither Scripture nor Christian charity permits us to decline. But how that light is to irradiate the awful future, we know not, and it is presumptuous even for charity too curiously to inquire. This and many other mysteries must be left to the infinite love and the infinite wisdom of the Holy Trinity. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ?[1]

(3) The final consideration is one of *character* :—

> No one can doubt that if character becomes unalterable, destiny becomes unalterable with it—unless annihilation should intervene. But from this it would not follow that at death unalterableness of character is reached.[2]

[1] *Christian Theology*, vol. iii., p. 386.
[2] Clarke, *Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 475.

We neither can go, as Christian pleaders, nor do we need to go, any farther than this. The real terror of the future is not in God, but in ourselves. We see and know that character does tend to permanence. Sometimes, even here, we seem to meet instances that are beyond recall, in bad men who have made characters which say, 'Evil, be thou my good.' But we do not know, finally. Some of the worst of such apparently hopeless cases are converted after all. Whether such characters, dying impenitent, will repent hereafter, we have no means of knowing. We have no right to say that they cannot. The rest is beyond us. Eternity, as a conception, is utterly beyond all human power of thought. The reiteration of the phrase 'for ever' does not make it any more thinkable. We can only watch character as it tends to permanence, and then passes beyond our vision. When this is thought out carefully, with all that it involves for the impenitent of certain loss, degradation, suffering, with possible perpetuation, and is preached as it can be, and ought to be, to an age like ours—compelled by blood and tears to face moral realities as never before—it will be far more potent for good, and deterrent from evil, than all the bygone threats of lurid horrors which no one now believes, or all the thoughtless reiterations of endlessness which never did justice to the Christian Scriptures, or to the loving righteousness of God, or to the plain facts of human nature.

It cannot be denied that the brighter side of the Christian doctrine of the hereafter, needs almost as much restatement as the darker. It is pitiful, and would be pathetic if it were not so mischievous,

to note the way in which myriads of believers cling to old forms of speech which are either meaningless or misleading. Probably thousands in this country will even yet esteem it sacrilege to alter the old phrase 'In My Father's house are many mansions.' Yet every student knows that in the language of to-day these words do not convey what Jesus intended.[1] And of those who so reverently cling to them, not one in a hundred has ever tried to form any intelligible conception as to what is meant. As for popular hymnology, in numberless cases the less said about it the better. It only affords occasion for unbelievers to sneer, and for thoughtful men and women to dismiss all helpful thought of a brighter future. The loss is immeasurable. The world of mankind never needed 'a hope that makes not to be ashamed' as much as now. It is not merely that our hearts are bleeding and broken under the hecatomb of earth's most murderous war, but generally, the fight of life, the wearying restlessness of civilization, the inexplicable mysteries of pain and evil, drive men to long for a valid hope that some day they may pass to

Where beyond these voices there is peace.

But they cannot now—whatever may have been in generations past—find either comfort or hope in the prospect of an everlasting nursery, or a soulless

[1] Neither the Greek *μονάι*, which only occurs in this chapter (John xiv.), nor the Vulgate 'mansiones' is represented with any approach to truth, in our modern word 'mansion,' with all that it now unalterably connotes. 'My Father's house' also may and must bear, for modern minds, a very different interpretation from that which it bore in the first century, if it is to bring comfort to the minds of this and coming generations.

Nirvana, or a sensuous monotony, or a ceaseless orchestra, or an eternity of ecclesiasticism. What men crave is the hope of a real life, as natural in the highest sense as this, rational, moral, spiritual; but with our present hindrances removed, perplexities solved, and sorrows healed; as much larger in environment as the experiences of the ablest full-grown man are than those of his pre-natal life; as much nobler in character as the most pure-hearted and unselfish woman is nobler than the tiresome little maid of the nursery. True, we have no words, or even thoughts, for such transformation. No more has any poet, or philosopher, or scientist, for the change in our island home from midwinter to full summer. But it is real, and sweet, and precious; so that experience becomes the best as well as the only description. It is not the indescribableness of the Christian hope which has caused the failure of so many to appreciate it, but the unreality of its usual portrayal. When it is redeemed from pietistic mawkishness, ecclesiastical narrowness, and childish sensationalisms, human nature will welcome it with heartfelt thankfulness, and there will be left only the wistful sigh of unbelief to ask whether it is not all too good to be true.

But for the Christian, Jesus Himself is the sufficient and eternal pledge that it is not. 'If it were not so, I would have told you.' The modern message, therefore, of Christian reality to a sorrowing as well as sinful world, in view of a great hereafter, may be as much more simple than it has been, as it needs to be more impressive, and must be unequivocal. The present age knows too much, feels too much, has suffered too much, to be content with either childish

or sensuous notions, let alone mawkish mockeries, concerning any brighter life beyond the grave. There are, happily, in Christian light certain great principles which may be urged without apology, and ought to be pressed home without hesitation.

In spite of all the dogmatisms of a band of implacable obscurantists who are endeavouring to rehabilitate the dying materialism of the nineteenth century, the deepest thought of philosophy—uncontradicted by science—no less than the strongest assurance of religion, is to the effect that death does not end all. Rather are there valid reasons for believing that it is as sure a passage into a wider existence, as is the transition of every human babe from pre-natal to post-natal life. When the human mind turns to Christian reality for light upon the dimness beyond, it may and must be assured that—whatever becomes of mediaeval theology—there is no warrant for expecting some one great spectacular *dies irae*, in order to an absolutely inconceivable aggregation of all past, present, and future humanity. The true 'day' or 'hour' of judgement for that vast unknown, comes when each soul puts off this mortal tenement and is 'clothed upon' for eternity. It does not 'go to heaven' or 'go to hell.' That is but a childish fantasy born of mundane experiences. It simply, though irresistibly, realizes the Christian principle :—

> Be not deceived ; God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows, that will he also reap. He who sows to his own lower nature will of that nature reap corruption. But he who sows to the spirit will of the spirit reap eternal life.

Here, as throughout the whole New Testament,

it is of the very greatest importance to make clear that the primary significance of 'eternal' is not quantitative but qualitative. It is not, for the sower to the highest, a case of continued existence. That is equally true of a sower to the lowest. It is rather a gentle but awful pointer to the real difference between the only heaven and the only hell, on Christian principles. Nothing so much as this calls for unhesitating, unequivocal, reiterated setting forth to-day.

The real hell to be taught or feared is the hell of the evil character which any soul may here be making for itself. This is the reality, for the representation of which all else in the New Testament is figurative. That known and unrepented evil does tend to corrupt moral character, every man knows. That such degradation tends to harden itself into content with evil, we also know too well. How and when, if ever, that hardening becomes permanent, we do not and cannot know, for any one human soul. The keener, deeper realization, beyond this present, of the bitter loss that must be felt through alienation from the Eternal Love, is dark enough, without any sensuous or theological exaggeration. The anguished remorse of Esau, whose bitter tears—useless for all redemption of the past—are recorded in both Testaments, suggests quite sufficient deterrent agony, without the repulsive harshness and false coarseness of most mediaeval and some Evangelical misrepresentations.

The only heaven worth contemplating by those who have learned of Jesus, or held out to humanity by His Gospel, is the heaven of a character development like His.

Paul's conception of heaven, we remember, was monosyllabic—' to depart hence and be *with* Christ.' But it would be no heaven, either to be with Him, or to see Him as He is, save for ' all those who have loved His appearing.' What it is to do this, the New Testament makes plain beyond all possibility of mistake. To live daily here and now in fellowship with Him—i.e. in all life's tasks and burdens, sorrows and perplexities, conflicts and temptations, to act, to speak, to think, to feel, as He would have us do—is the only way of preparation for any heaven that is worth hoping for. But having such a hope, Christian reality may ' use great boldness of speech ' and say without a tremble of doubt that—

> There the tears of earth are dried;
> There its hidden things are clear;
> There the work of life is tried
> By a juster Judge than here.

For ' the Father hath committed all judgement to the Son.' To be *with* Him can never mean less than the development of ' the utmost for the highest.' That closer communion with the Eternal Love, in all that it connotes, is necessarily beyond earth's language to convey, or human thought to conceive. But it is as certain as a Divine Fatherhood can make it, that, in such nearer fellowship with Him and His, there will be larger, higher, nobler avenues of service, which will make the deathless life to be an everlasting benediction. More, we cannot, need not, know, either for others or ourselves, until our present pilgrimage is past.

VIII

EXPERIENTIAL—THE ROOT OF THE WHOLE MATTER.

The present calls for men who not only have seen Jesus standing in a niche of the past, but who see Him to-day beckoning them on to a realization of the noblest attainments in the modern world of action. For them Jesus is more than a pattern to be copied. He is a demonstration of spiritual power to be felt now by those who have received the unction of His Spirit.—*The Historicity of Jesus*, PROFESSOR CASE, p. 342.

Brother Lawrence, not being a learned man, was set to work in the kitchen of the monastery. He says of his occupation there, 'The time of business does not differ with me from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament.'—*Religion of a Mature Mind*, PROFESSOR G. A. COE, p. 225.

'I, A. B., do seriously vow in the presence of Almighty God that in this Assembly whereof I am a member, I will maintain nothing but what I believe to be most agreeable to the word of God, nor in point of discipline but what may make most for God's glory and the peace and good of this Church.' A solemn pledge of this kind, added to such an unreserved recognition of Christ's place in the relations of God and man, as has been characteristic of Christian faith from the beginning, and as is covered by the form suggested above, is surely all that any Church can wisely ask from its ministers. To adopt this course would do more than anything to meet the intellectual crisis in the Churches. It would bring an immense moral relief to many who are in the Church. It would remove obstacles which keep many outside it. It would restore its self-respect and its honour in the eyes of the world. It would provide the only reasonable intellectual basis for union. And it would not imperil the Christian relation to Christ.

It is not open or unanswered questions that paralyse; it is ambiguous or evasive answers, or answers of which we can make no use, because we cannot make them our own. And it is not the acceptance of any theology or Christology, however penetrating or profound, which keeps us Christian; we remain loyal to our Lord and Saviour only because He has apprehended us and His hand is strong.—*Jesus and the Gospel*, DR. J. DENNEY, p. 410.

VIII

EXPERIENTIAL—THE ROOT OF THE WHOLE MATTER

It has been well and truly said that 'the experiential evidence of God in Christ is in fact the most tremendous thing with which the historical and philosophical investigation of religion has to deal.'[1] But the quest cannot possibly be evaded. Nor is there any reason why it should be. As our personal consciousness is the bedrock certainty upon which psychological science must ever build, if it builds at all, so is personal experience the final proof and absolute truth to which, in the realm of religion, mind and heart alike must come. They will do well to come hand in hand, for each needs the other, and to quarrel means ultimate suicide for both.

So far as historical investigation is concerned, what has already been stated must be taken as all that can here be attempted. But whilst we bear that distinctly in mind, all matters relating to experience must be dealt with on philosophical lines, for only so can we arrive at reality. Whether sensation or aspiration be considered, the only ultimate certainty that it is real is the personal consciousness which, in all its varieties and degrees, is summed up as 'experience.' The main consideration in the present case may be put as simply as

[1] *The Religion of a Mature Mind*, Dr. G. A. Coe, p. 434.

possible thus. All religious experience—like all other experience—is primarily and necessarily subjective. That admits of no controversy. Whether we think of Romanist or Methodist, of the mediaeval mystic or the modern Christian philanthropist, the radical assurance from which all else springs—assuming sincerity—is the same as that recorded of the poor healed man, browbeaten by the Pharisees —' One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see.' From that decision there is no appeal.

But as in ordinary thought every appearance, every appreciable ' phenomenon,' connotes both a seer and a something seen, or a sound as well as a hearer, so must religious experience justify itself before those who have it not, by supplying reasons for its assurance, or assumption, of objective as well as subjective reality. In other words, Christian experience, to be valid as an appeal to others, must be an experience of something which cannot arise subjectively from within, but requires as an adequate cause something objective, i.e. without the inner world of consciousness. How first to attain to such experience, and then certify both to oneself and others that it is not a mere mirage, not self-deception, not a castle in the air, but a real response to a real external influence, a genuine effect from a cause not ourselves, actual communion with the living God, is the greatest of Christian problems.

Without plunging into abysmal depths of metaphysics, we may here assume that religious experience of any kind involves personality. Of the psychic life of creatures below the human, we know really nothing, and so may well leave them out of account. Man is the only animal capable of religion. Whether

he has come to be such by special creation or evolution, is here irrelevant. He is, as we now know him, so far fashioned in the divine image—'Thou hast made him but little lower than God'—as to be capable of worship, and at least able to appreciate the divine beyond, as well as within, himself. All that is here involved is in these days garnered more and more fully in the term 'personality.' It is not incumbent upon us, however, to dwell at any length upon the immeasurable importance of what may almost be called the modern discovery of personality. Suffice it to say that personality is at once the nearest conception we can form of the real self which feels and thinks and wills, and the final, because unanswerable, proof that we are not machines or automata, to which consciousness is a mere inert 'epiphenomenon,' but moral beings, free enough to be responsible for actions which are veritably ours. For the rest, the vivid summary by the late Professor Borden P. Bowne may be accepted as both true and sufficient.

> Personality can never be construed as a product or compound; it can only be experienced as a fact. It must be possible, because it is given as actual. Whenever we attempt to go behind this fact, we are trying to explain the explanation. We explain the objects before the mirror by the images which seem to exist behind the mirror. There is nothing behind the mirror. When we have lived and described the personal life, we have done all that is possible in sane and sober speculation. If we try to do more, we only fall a prey to abstractions. This self-conscious existence is the truly ultimate fact.[1]

[1] *Personalism*, p. 264.

What is known as 'Christian experience' is, however, something more than self-consciousness. It is rooted in personality, because only a person is capable of knowing it. But as the beautiful and fragrant flower is something more than the soil out of which it grows through its response to sun and air and moisture, so is Christian experience much more than mere personalism. All the worst things of earth, quite as really as all the best, spring from personalities. Poisonous weeds flourish sometimes in the same ground as wholesome herbs. Christian experience stands for the elimination of at least most of the noxious weeds which personality is capable of producing, and the growth instead of the 'fruit of the Spirit,' which may truthfully be described as the best products of human nature.

Apart from the exercise of imagination, and the use of our powers of abstraction, all our ordinary experiences are responses to influences outside ourselves. How far the self remoulds these influences, turning them into conscious psychical activities, as different from the causing influences as digested food is from that which is taken into the mouth, does not here concern us. There could be no chyle if there were no food. There could be no Christian experience if there were nothing to make the experience distinctively Christian. In the degree in which it is real, it is the inward realization of what Christ asserted and promised. It is the personal proof that what He taught is both true and good. It is the ascertained certainty that what He promised does, under His conditions, actually come to pass. All that this involves may well be the exhaustless theme for any number of the most thoughtful

discourses, both by pen and word of mouth. Ultimately, i.e. exhaustively, like all experience, it is inexpressible. Those who know it can only say, 'Thanks be unto God for His ineffable gift.' Good Bernard of Clairvaux came as near to the unspeakable as words can take us, when he wrote :—

O Hope of every contrite heart,
O Joy of all the meek,
To those who fall how kind Thou art,
How good to those who seek !

But what to those who find ? Ah, this
Nor tongue nor pen can show ;
The love of Jesus, what it is
None but His loved ones know.

For this is much more than mere religious emotion. It is the expression of a fundamental truth about which there is not the smallest hesitation in the New Testament, but which not a few modern teachers in churches that consider themselves 'advanced,' appear to be afraid to acknowledge, if they do not also seek to jettison it. Whatever else is involved in Christian experience, it is the acknowledgement of, and response to, personal influence from without the self. If we say it is the experience of a person, language seems inexact ; though we do know fairly well, day by day, what it is to experience the personal influence of those about us. Certainly it is distinct from the impressions which things produce upon us. We have more sense than to love, or hate, things. But—in varying degrees, of course—it is love or hate, attraction or aversion, which are set going in our consciousness through daily contact with our friends or foes. So

long as language counts for anything at all, both Gospels and Epistles in our Christian records are herein unmistakable. What Jesus asked for and what His disciples gave Him, what the Apostles ever gloried in feeling, and every living member of the living Church joyfully shared, was the indescribable but also immeasurable power of a sublime personal affection. There is no need to quote, because it is everywhere manifest. But it is far from everywhere manifest in modern Christianity.

Professor Seeley, we remember, went so far as to affirm that 'the direct love of Christ, as it was felt by His first followers, is a rare thing among modern Christians.' But he did not know. The probability, amounting to certainty, is that there are more Christians to-day who feel this 'direct love,' than Christendom has ever held before. In the very nature of the case it is not something which can be trumpeted abroad. Poppies in a corn-field can be seen a long way off; but not so the sweet violets in the hedgerow. Their fragrance may tell that they are near, but a keen eye and a delicate hand alone will find them. Those who love most, not seldom say least. Silence, in this region, does not mean unreality. But in the face of all that is expressed in the New Testament, and all the inexpressible reality in human souls which has obtained since then, from Augustine to this hour, it is strange indeed to find able advocates of general Christian principles endeavouring to shift the whole living centre of Christian experience from a personal affection to an intellectual abstraction. Dr. Denney has recently said that—

> Christianity has never existed in the world as a religion in which men shared the faith of Jesus, but was from the very beginning a religion in which Jesus was the object of faith.

This is true, but not the whole truth. Jesus was, as Seeley hints, the object of love quite as much as of faith. When Paul wrote—what has been, alas, so long miserably rendered in the Jacobean Version as 'Wherefore we labour'—'Wherefore we make it our love and our ambition to please Him, whether we live or die,'[1] he spoke for all the rest of the Apostles and their fellow workers, and did but voice truly the personal devotion which thrilled them all. Yet to-day, in regard to such an utterance as Dr. Denney's above given, a well-known pastor of an influential church writes :—

> That is the decision of one of the schools of the prophets. But here is the conclusion to which another has come. 'The faith of Jesus in God,' says Dr. Orchard, 'was a whole-hearted allegiance to a self-giving impulse at work within Him, which was to Him the will of God. And if you cannot feel something of that within yourself, if you have not deliberately taken the step of regarding that inward Guest as the final, absolute, and unquestionable reality on which your life is founded, then I cannot understand how you can put your faith for all eternity in One who, in spite of every other consideration, rested Himself upon this alone.'

Upon this the writer goes on to say :—

> I do not think the liberal Christian view of the relation of Jesus to His Gospel could be more

[1] 2 Cor. v. 9.

clearly stated, and it is the only one which satisfies me. I believe this is what Paul means when he writes of his faith in Christ. Whenever he uses that mystical phrase, he is thinking not merely of Jesus, the crucified carpenter. It is doubtful whether any of the Apostles places so little emphasis upon the historical Jesus as Paul does. He is thinking of the inner Christ-spirit to which he has given the allegiance of his soul.

If we always took care to speak not of 'Jesus Christ,' but of 'Jesus the Christ,' we should keep clear the important truth that the word 'Jesus' is the name of a person, and the word 'Christ' is the name of an age-long ideal. It is the name of that mysterious inward 'power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness.'

Of such words, from such sources, one has to speak courteously and respectfully. None the less plainly must we say that whether this be 'liberal' or not, it certainly is *not* what the New Testament represents as the experience of the Apostles and early Christians. Any more than it is a true response to what the Gospels say concerning the attitude of Jesus Himself.

As to whether Paul, more than others, 'places so little emphasis upon the historical Jesus,' let us note a word from Dr. Loofs, who is surely 'liberal' enough, in that he dismisses the Virgin Birth, with other matters generally considered essential :—

> It is nothing but a *fable convenue* of former liberal theology, that Paul knew next to nothing about the earthly life of Jesus, or that he did not even care to know anything about it. Weighty is the fact that Paul is very far from betraying

merely a superficial acquaintance with the earthly life of Jesus. Paul did not write Gospels, but occasionally letters to his congregations. The letters cannot show all that Paul knew of Jesus. Harnack pointed out, very aptly, that one might feel inclined to judge from the Acts that its author knew really nothing else about the life of Christ, than what he had gleaned from Christological dogmatics—and yet the same author wrote the third Gospel. Paul, too—Harnack himself calls attention to this parallel—evidently knew far more about Jesus than he had occasion to reveal in his letters.[1]

Again, if it be so necessary to speak always of 'Jesus the Christ,' how comes it that the writers of the New Testament seldom or never do so? Did they know nothing of that concerning which modern 'liberal' theology is so confident? However, the most important matter to note with all care, is that so far as plain language can avail, Paul himself does definitely contradict this writer, and anticipates with approval what Professor Seeley emphasized. All too easily have careless readers of the old Version slipped into an error which supports the above writer's contention. In his second letter to Timothy—this is not the place for an argument as to the genuineness of this letter; there are good reasons for assuming it—Paul writes, 'For I know whom I have believed.' In most cases of popular quotation it became 'I know in whom,' which would be such an intellectual apprehension as is sketched above. But the Revised Version,

[1] *What is the Truth About Jesus Christ?* by F. Loofs, Ph.D., Th.D. Professor in University of Halle-Wittenberg, p. 152.

happily, makes it impossible for the ordinary reader so to misunderstand. 'I know *Him* whom I have trusted' was the Apostle's avowal, and it is really an incandescent summary of all his other references to his faith in Christ. Most assuredly his Christian experience was what Seeley says—'that which Christ held to be all in all, spontaneous warmth, free and generous devotion.' And we must add, to express the whole truth, devotion to Himself. This is, indeed, unmistakably the unique note of His message to men. No other of the great world-teachers of religion have ever dared to say, 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments.' Mohammed might have said, 'If ye own me the prophet,' or, 'If ye fear me as God's representative.' But 'If ye love Me' is a demand for more than trust in God. It is included in His last words—'Believe in God; believe also in Me.' And Lecky's well-known words have come—from the standpoint of rationalism—much nearer the truth than the liberal theology above quoted, when he refers to Jesus Christ as having 'filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love, and shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions.'

So that when, furthermore, Mrs. Herman, writing as carefully as earnestly concerning 'The Meaning and Value of Mysticism,' tells us that—

> the pearl of great price that is hid for us in the field of Mysticism, is simple devotion and humble loving intimacy with Jesus, as the secret of the mystic knowledge of God and the mystic communion with God,[1]

[1] p. 374.

the sincere inquirer is constrained to own that not only does such Mysticism lose the bewildering mysteriousness which repels ordinary minds, but ordinary faith in Christ becomes only real in the degree in which it is mystical. There is something as timely as pathetic, in the summary with which the above cultivated and able writer concludes her scrutiny.

> Torn by conflicting philosophies and theologies, lured by a thousand will-o'-the-wisps of pseudo-mystical cults, helpless between a world that has lost its way and a Church which seems bereft of all power to guide, where shall the soul find anchorage and renewal? The great company of Christian mystics answer, 'In personal, sacramental, unbroken communion with Christ.' And we know that they speak truly. Such communion alone can remake the soul; it alone can recreate the Church. It is the soul of Mysticism, the secret of its highest wisdom, the impulse of its most divine adventure.[1]

But if the New Testament is of any account at all, that communion with Christ is not only the soul of Mysticism, but the beating heart of Christian reality. The lessons of the centuries have at least made clear, beyond all dispute, that Christianity is neither a creed-made machine through which men have to be ground in order to escape 'eternal torment,' nor is it an episcopal system with sacerdotalism as a fine wire-mesh permeating all its parts. Its soul and substance is an experience. Its very pith and marrow is a revelation. It is Christ's unique, unparalleled, unequivocal revelation of the

[1] p. 377.

love of God, finding its utmost possible expression in the assurance of the Divine Fatherhood, made clear and true, actual and vivid, to the individual consciousness. That, indeed, was Christ's own experience. But we are not asked to share it. It is for every disciple to have such an experience as his very own. All theology is but a means to that end. Unless that comes to pass, Christianity is but a mocking mirage in the desert of human perplexity, a shell without a kernel, an electric lamp without the current that turns all darkness into light.

Here, therefore, is the first great true function of the Christian Church, without whose fulfilment all else is but the useless clatter of ecclesiastical machinery. The Christian Church ought to be the birthplace of the mystic, the home of the saint, the training-school of the real Christian. For the real Christian, the saint, the mystic, are all one in essence. They only differ as children in the same holy family differ; as flowers vary in the same well-kept garden.

Alas, in the light of everyday life, here is the pointer to the greatest, commonest, most insidious, most deadly heresy that has ever afflicted Christianity. It is the easy-going convention that the Church's business is to make, or help, men and women to be good. But the doctrine of Jesus from the 'Sermon on the Mount' onwards, differs unmistakably from this. 'What *extra* do ye?' was His unalterable test of reality, in the 'Kingdom of Heaven' which He gave Himself to establish. It is the extra, not the ordinary, upon which He ever insists. But Christendom in general, and most

churches in particular, have indolently or timidly slipped back into contentment with the ordinary. This is the source of all its age-long as well as modern failure ; just as the opposite—the demand for and supply of the extra—was the open secret of the early Christian triumph. It is the saint, not the ordinary church attendant, or even the average church member, for whom God and man alike are waiting in this as in preceding ages. The Christian Church which does not create and harbour saints is as useless a disappointment for the purposes of the Kingdom of Heaven, as for the needs of modern warfare would be a munition factory which produced no live shells ; or, in better times of peace, a university which harboured and developed no genuine scholars. There are plenty of good men and women outside all the churches, good in many respects which Christian ethics must be the last to deny. That such goodness is as insufficient for human needs as it is actual, all history shows, and tragically enough the history of the past two years. On broadest political no less than religious grounds, it has been demonstrated, that the ordinary goodness which permeates civilization, and sometimes boasts itself as ' kultur,' is not enough to tame the beast in human nature, let alone bring to pass all the highest of which humanity is capable. That double ideal calls for no less than ' the higher-toned goodness which we call holiness ' as its dynamic. When saintship is real, the transformation follows as surely and happily, as in Stevenson's immortal story the genuine prescription safely transformed Edward Hyde into Dr. Jekyll. But no counterfeit substitute will act.

In contemplating this double ideal, we have already passed the bounds of Mysticism. Mysticism may be defined as holy individualism. But the true saint, the real Christian, has to go, and does go, beyond that. He has two great commands, not one, to keep. 'On these two,' said the Master, 'all else depends.' The actuality of Christian experience, as a psychological no less than spiritual fact, may be assumed. Modern science bows before the reality which it cannot explain. The late Professor James's book on the *Varieties of Religious Experience* may be said to have set the seal of modern psychology upon the scientific reality of such experience. It was, indeed, vastly overrated as a contribution to Christian faith, for the final inferences from it were quite on a line with the author's avowal that he was neither Christian nor theist. But its fascinating lucidity of style, and abundance of interesting examples, gave it great vogue amongst modern readers. His conclusion was definitely valuable as against the ultramontane materialists who are by no means yet extinct.

> I can, of course, put myself into the sectarian scientist's attitude, and imagine vividly that the world of sensations and of scientific laws may be all. But whenever I do this, I hear that inward monitor of which W. K. Clifford once wrote, whispering the word 'bosh.' Humbug is humbug, even though it bear the scientific name, and the total expression of human experience, as I view it objectively, invincibly, urges me beyond the narrow scientific bounds.[1]

[1] p. 519.

But as to the specific validity of the Christian experience which begins with some kind of conversion, and goes on to saintliness, it is more enheartening to us to note this expert's deliberate assurance that we need not be browbeaten by modern 'deterministic' cynics, after the type of Mark Twain or Mr. Bertrand Russell.

> But if you, being orthodox Christians, ask me as a psychologist, whether the reference of a phenomenon to a subliminal self does not exclude the notion of the direct presence of the Deity altogether, I have to say frankly, that as a psychologist, I do not see why it necessarily should.[1]

We need, therefore, make no apology for assuming the validity of the personal experience of holiness, or Mysticism, as the incandescent focus of Christian reality.

But that reality includes much more than a focus. To every circle there must be not only centre but circumference. No matter how short or how long the radii, bounds there must be if any spot is to be a centre. If there be no circumference, there can be no definite sphere. But nothing in the whole history of thought, let alone of religion, is more definite, more unmistakable, than the wide extent of the sphere of Christian faith. Assuredly it is not merely the consciousness of the individual soul. No word in the New Testament appears to catch the eye or mind of quoters more frequently than that ascribed to Jesus in the third Gospel—'The kingdom of God is within you.'[2] But a fair

[1] p. 242. [2] Luke xvii. 20, 21.

scrutiny of the context serves plainly to decide the ambiguity of the Greek against such self-centred suggestion.

> And being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, He replied by saying, The kingdom of God is not coming as your eager watching supposes; you will not hear any one crying out, 'Here it is,' or, 'There it is.' For see, the kingdom of God is in your very midst.

In plain truth, and with all respect to some commentators, the Kingdom of God 'within' a solitary human soul is unthinkable. No divine kingdom can be real which does not embody obedience to the laws of the kingdom. And these, as we have seen, are unmistakably twofold. The two great commands which swallow up all the rest are inseparable. It cannot be too often said that he who does not keep them both, keeps neither. That has been the weakness, if not the dire mistake, of Mysticism. It highly cultivates the centre, but ignores the sphere. The saint must not do that. Whatever good things may be suggested on behalf of the monastic life, or the usefulness of nunneries, they can never escape the remonstrance of the Apostle already quoted, but bearing repetition :—

> I wrote you not to have anything to do with lustful men; not that I meant, of course, that you should keep away from all this world's libertines, or greedy men, or thieves, or idol worshippers. For to do that, you would have to get out of the world altogether.'[1]

[1] 1 Cor. v. 9.

Possibly Paul had in clear memory more than we know, of the words of his Master. At all events, we have from Him the unmistakable petition :—

> I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.[1]

The altruism of the true discipleship which Jesus Himself outlined is quite unmistakable. 'Freely ye have received, freely give'—'It is more blessed to give than to receive'—are His unchangeable and unchallengeable sentences of condemnation for all self-centred 'spirituality.' Christian solipsism is, in His light, sheer self-delusion. No sanctification of personality can 'fulfil the law of Christ,' without heeding the accompanying—'bear ye one another's burdens.' No hallowing of egoism can keep His commandments, even as John so emphatically declared—'If a man say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar.'

Christian reality, therefore, can never be esoteric. The real Christian must desire that the whole world should be Christian. The Christianity which has no missionary spirit is an unmitigated self-contradiction. But here comes the great difficulty. Even if all the churches were incandescent foci of altruism, they cannot impart to the world the secret of the reality they cherish. Experience can never, under any circumstances, be either given away or shared. An imparted religious experience is as inconceivable as bestowed health, or shared sleep. Such is the marvel, the problem, the unfathomable abyss,

[1] John xvii. 15.

of human personality. The ancient seer said much more than he knew, when he declared that—'Every heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger does not intermeddle with its joys.' That is true, we know, of all life's conflict and delights; but it is most of all true as to religious experience. As every human child passes through its own birth to its own childhood's glad or sad experiences, so must each human soul pass through its own kind of conversion to its own unspeakable knowledge of Jesus Christ, if Christian reality is to characterize its after experience.[1] If the saint is ever to say, as his Master did—

> He that sent Me is with Me; the Father has not left Me to Myself, for I am always doing what is pleasing to Him,

he must cultivate continually a like communion with God such as no other can share with him, any

[1] We need, really, another word in our language to express what the New Testament writers made ever plain in their own tongue. It is unfortunate that our verb to 'know' is so helplessly ambiguous, that only by a special tone, or an added adverb, can we make clear what we intend by its use, whereas the Greek language has five words at its disposal. The whole difference between Christian reality and unreality is latent in the word 'knowledge.' Every reader of the Greek Testament knows that for the real knowledge which is distinct from superficial hearsay there is a verb—used a dozen times—and a noun which is found eighteen times. In any adequate translation, this distinction ought never to be overlooked. The following few instances are typical of the rest, and need no comment:—Matt. xi. 27—'No one really knows the Son, save the Father.' 1 Cor. xiii. 2—'Then shall I know fully, even as also I have been fully known.' 2 Cor. vi. 9—'As unknown, and yet well known.' Col. i. 6—'The day ye heard and really knew the grace of God.' Rom. x. 2—'A zeal for God, but not according to real knowledge.' Eph. iv. 13—'The real knowledge of the Son of God.' Col. ii. 2—'The real knowledge of the mystery.' 2 Pet. i. 2—'Be multiplied in the true knowledge of God.'

more than the breath of his body's life can be shared with his dearest friend.

How, then, is the saint, or the Christian Church, to fulfil its truest mission? 'Ye shall be My witnesses, both in Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth,' is the injunction recorded as coming from the risen Christ to the disciples. As such, it seems to be at once the Church's plainest duty, and the limit of its responsibility, to bear witness. All that Christian experience can do to fulfil the Christian aim is to demonstrate its own validity, and to exhibit its unmeasured potency.

> What we have felt and seen,
> With confidence we tell;
> And publish to the sons of men
> The signs infallible,

ought to be, not only during a time of 'revival,' but always and everywhere, the hall-mark of Christian reality. How far both individual Christians and churches in general have failed to render such a witness, is not easy to say. For certainly every age has had its real Christian saints, and this our day has them also. In the rush and crush of our modern life, it is almost impossible to do justice to either the quantity or the quality of the Christian saintship which is always working in our midst. It may take the form of Mary's devotion, or of Martha's. Jesus appreciated both. There was no rebuke of Martha for being practical; nor any exaltation of Mary for being 'mystical.' He never said, 'But one thing is needful,' however largely well-meaning piety has manufactured sermons out

of that phrase.[1] His gentle remonstrance with Martha was but a tender plea for a homely meal, since in the sweetness and light which He seeks to bring to human kind, the homely and the holy are one. The utmost lesson He would have had the sisters learn, and would have all His followers ever remember, is that the practical issues from the mystical; and of the two, the deeper comes first. The holy life, in all its ramifications, grows from the experience, as surely as the spreading oak-tree develops from the hidden root. Seeley wrote rather sharply in reference to what he termed 'the multiform and grotesque perversion of Christianity':—'That the fruits of a Christianity so hollow should be poor and sickly is not surprising.'

But he was right in suggesting that what was wanted was the internal 'spontaneous devotion.' Given that, and the rest would follow, as inevitably as the light shines forth from our lamps when the electric current is in full flow. Where love is real, service is not merely easy, it is always inevitable.

> But this it was that made me move
> As light as carrier birds in air,
> I loved the weight I had to bear,
> Because it needed help of love.

That we know to be for ever true. If, therefore, there be to-day, as of yore, some lamentable degree of failure in the witness of Christian experience to

[1] Luke x. 42. The text is somewhat uncertain, but the most reasonable critical conclusion seems to be that adopted by Dr. Plummer, in the *International Critical Commentary*, which may be rendered 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious in providing many things for us, but we only need few—or even one will do.'

the world, the remedy is close at hand. Here is the indictment of fifty years ago from an impartial observer :—

> The objection which practical men take is a very important one, as the criticisms of such men always are, being founded commonly upon large observation and not perverted by theory. They say that the love of Christ does not in practice produce the nobleness and largeness of character which has been represented as its proper and natural result ; that instead of inspiring those who feel it with reverence and hope for their kind, it makes them exceedingly narrow in their sympathies, disposed to deny and explain away even the most manifest virtues displayed by men, and despair of the future destiny of the great majority of their fellow creatures ; that instead of binding them to their kind, it divides them from it by a gulf which they themselves proclaim to be impassable and eternal, and unites them only in a gloomy conspiracy of misanthropy with each other.[1]

Has half a century altered this, or modified it? We may thankfully believe that it has. It may be said, without hesitation, that there is a better understanding and worthier representation of the Gospel of Jesus in the churches to-day, than ever before. But it must at the same time be acknowledged that the average professing Christian and the ordinary church, do not fulfil Christ's word so as to move the modern world. He said :—

> Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

[1] *Ecce Homo* (Cheap Edition), p. 59.

That there are some, many, saints indeed who do this, is happily beyond all question. But when a gentle-minded conservative clergyman of the Anglican Church deliberately publishes his conviction that ' the great religious difficulty of the present day is the striking contrast between the lives of Christians and the rules they profess to accept,' it seriously confirms what we cannot but see and feel, that there is a sad lack of that Christian experience which, in the degree in which it is real, can no more be hidden than the light and heat of a real fire.

If it be asked why the witness of Christendom should so fail from what might be, and on New Testament principles ought to be, the reasons are not far to seek, though this is not the occasion for their elaboration. In brief summary they are such as these. The unmistakable ideals and commands of Jesus are so familiarized by repetition that they become meaningless—as, indeed, the sweetest, tenderest, and strongest words will ever be, when they are reduced by thoughtless reiteration to mere sounds without sense. Only He who knows all hearts knows how far this dry-rot permeates Christendom in an age when it costs little or nothing to seem to be Christian, but as much as ever, in many ways, to be Christian indeed. Superstition and pietism still contribute not a little to the unreality of Christian experience, and consequently to the failure of its witness. They are both largely based on a theology that ought to be obsolete, but is far from being so, thanks to the sincere but misguided zeal of those who will not face what is now known to be true concerning God and man, the Bible and the universe.

It is passing strange, truly, how some real saints seem even yet to miss the comfort and inspiration of the greatest truth of all which Jesus Himself so utterly pledged to men, viz. the love of the Father. The pitiful perversion which makes human sin, rather than divine love, the pivot of all else in Christian faith, yet prevails to a lamentable extent. Not long since appeared the biography of one of the best of modern saints, and in it is recorded how he was wont to say that after all he was but 'a hell-hound' in the sight of God. As if any father living, who deserved the name, would ever so regard any child of his; let alone one who was every day striving to serve and please him for love's sake. Such repellent unrealities often pass for humility. Self-vilifying epithets are taken as special proofs of spirituality; but in truth they are mostly libels upon the character of God, which tend only to keep ordinary mortals away from Him.

We have noted already the difference between the apostolic experience, which was unquestionably a real love for a personal Saviour and Lord, and the modern exhortation to build faith upon an abstract conception. This, at least, is certain in addition, that no intellectual conception, however spiritualized, will supply such a dynamic for an outshining experience, as the 'direct love of Christ' which is so unmistakably emphasized in the New Testament, and has been so really incarnated in myriads of human hearts and lives.

Whom you love even though you never saw Him; nay, even you still do not see Him, yet, believing on Him, you rejoice with unutterable

and glorious gladness, thus making sure of the great aim of your faith, the saving of your souls.[1]

Whether these are literally Peter's words or not, they are true to all the rest of our Christian records, and Mrs. Herman's comment is as applicable now as it would have been then.

> To love Jesus simply and constantly, has ever been the mystic's most 'liberal education' in the science of God; and wherever he has thought to transcend that personal relationship in the interests of a supposed spiritual immediacy, he has fallen from true communion with God and failed of valid spiritual achievement.[2]

It would be difficult indeed to find words which more truthfully express the real and final reason for modern Christian failure. The Church's witness fails—as our strength fails when from some disease or accident the heart's beating is enfeebled—for want of a real and vivid experience. The experience fails for want of the real love of the living Christ, in the soul's inmost depths.

II. But it is time we asked what the fierce light of modern scrutiny has done or is doing to this ultimate Christian reality. Without any pretence of completeness, we may here specify four effects which merit recognition.

(1) Modern science has come to acknowledge both the reality and the potency of all those experiences which range from an initial conversion to the deeper convictions and emotions of the mystic. Besides the representative testimony of Professor

[1] 1 Pet. i. 8. [2] *Meaning of Mysticism*, p. 375.

James already cited, notice may well be taken of the avowal of Dr. Percy Gardner, whom no one will accuse of 'evangelical' bias.

> In the opinion of some of the ablest and best trained of modern psychologists, such facts as that man is susceptible of spiritual inspiration, and that such inspiration has power in a moment to change the course of his life, and endow him with strength and wisdom beyond his previous hopes—such facts as these stand on as well-assured a basis, are as fully borne out by testimony and experience, as any facts whatever of the conscious life.[1]

He further well expresses the substance of what science thus acknowledges:—

> The sum of Christian experience is that in the minds of a great number of devout Christians, many of them of most ordinary intelligence, there is a constant sense of a Presence which is inwardly revealed, of transactions between the soul and something which surrounds and dominates it, which may be described in various ways and from many points of view, but which is a thing of reality. In great crises of the life it often impresses the spirit as much more real and objective than things which appear to the bodily eyes, such as the stars; though, in ordinary times of activity in the world, it seems underlying rather than conspicuous.[2]

(2) But, not unnaturally, modern scrutiny declines to accept at once and easily, even if at all, the divine objective which is ever required to constitute

[1] *Modernity and the Churches*, p. 108. [2] Ibid., p. 78.

reality in Christian experience. As Dr. Gardner also says :—

> It is only by divine aid that we are able to carry out the divine will. God must work in us, and we in God, if we would accomplish that for which we were sent into the world.[1]

The subjective reality of religious experience is as unchallengeable as the reality of all our daily consciousness. But it can never be Christian experience, without the actuality of the divine objective which appears to be so real to the believer in Jesus Christ. This objective is certainly not demonstrable on scientific lines. The attempt so to prove the objectivity of Christian experience could only end in the same way as the quest of those who with a telescope search for God in vain among the stars. Yet science, as well as history and philosophy, must be reckoned with, if Christian faith to-day is to rest on a firm basis. Christian experience must not only be correlated with our modern knowledge, but be willing to submit itself to any reasonable tests which will differentiate it from pietistic delusion, from a disordered imagination, from fanatic self-deception. Plainly it will be gain, not loss, to Christian faith, if these mental vagaries can be eliminated. Hence true believers should welcome, not repudiate, all such inquisition. The things which can be shaken will be well removed, 'that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.'

The science of history demands that there should be a real, i.e. historic, Jesus; for without Him all

[1] p. 109.

else is but a cunningly devised fable, and the love of Christ, for which Apostles lived and martyrs died, is a pitiful delusion. This is the noteworthy force of that strong saying of Paul which has for three centuries been misrepresented to English readers, and which even the Revised Version has not corrected. The Apostle did not say, 'If in this life only we have hoped in Christ'—the Greek as well as the sense is plain enough to the contrary—but:—

> If in this life we have just hoped in Christ and nothing more, then we are more to be pitied than all other men.[1]

The question of questions is whether Christians have—in Dr. Findlay's words—'a hope without legitimate basis or ultimate fruition,' or whether our hope rests on facts which cannot be set aside. We have seen above that, in spite of all the culture and persistence of the modern mythical school, 'the fact of Christ' remains as unshakable without as within the human soul. Whoever wrote our Second Epistle of Peter, the summary there given rests upon the rock of fact.

> We were not fanatic followers of cunningly devised fables, when we told you all about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; on the contrary, we had been eye-witnesses of His majesty.

In all the vapourings of any modern critical craze concerning the historicity of Jesus, therefore,

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 19.

nothing is found which can rationally compel the Christian to think that his love of his Lord is but devotion to a phantom.

Science certainly claims to be heard in regard to the 'mighty works,' which, as above noted, historical criticism declared, half a century ago, to be inseparable from the rest of the record of the historical Jesus. It is true that since Huxley's day no man in the name of science has ventured to assert that miracles are impossible; but greater stress than ever has been laid upon the necessity for adequate evidence. Hume's objection counts for less than nothing; inasmuch as it is quite easy to show that the difficulties which arise from rejecting the miraculous, in Christ's case, are greater than those which accompany the acceptance of them. Assuredly Christian experience connotes a superhuman Christ. But all that science has to say thereupon is, 'Be careful, and do not credit your Christ with more than can rationally, i.e. upon valid evidence, be attributed to Him.' Which demand, genuine Christian faith is most ready to concede.

If philosophy desires to know exactly how the human subjective is related to, or works with, the divine objective in Christian experience, there is neither shame nor loss for faith in a frank confession of ignorance. Professor James seems to have anticipated Dr. Sanday, in turning for explanation to the subliminal consciousness which modern psychology is now constrained to acknowledge. We may leave, with a hush of awe, the modern theologian's application of this suggestion to what the old theologians knew as the Hypostatic Union. But as regards the co-working of the divine with the human

in the true believers' experience, we shall not do amiss to leave its rationale where our expert psychologist left it. Said Professor James :—

> If the grace of God miraculously operates, it probably operates through the subliminal door, then. But just *how* anything operates in this region is still unexplained, and we shall do well now to say good-bye to the process of transformation altogether—leaving it, if you like, a good deal of a psychological or theological mystery—and turn our attention to the fruits of the religious condition, no matter in what way they may have been produced.[1]

The answer of Jesus, in Matt. xix. 26, to the perplexed disciples' query has been long enough misinterpreted. To have made then a bald assertion of divine omnipotence would have been but to mock at their bewilderment. But what He did actually say, and undoubtedly mean, is the nearest approach we shall get to the expression of the inexpressible.

> But when the disciples heard that, they were astounded beyond measure, and said, In that case whoever can be saved? But looking earnestly upon them Jesus answered, Amid human influences only, it is indeed impossible; but in association with God, all things are possible.

What it is in evangelical phrase 'to be living near to God,' words are not adequate to convey, nor thought able to formulate That, however, is

[1] *Varieties*, &c., p. 270.

[2] The parallel use of the same phrase, παρὰ θεῷ, in 1 Cor. vii. 24, is well rendered by Dr. Weymouth, 'Where each one stood when he was called, there, brethren, let him still stand—close to God.'

rather a testimony to its reality than otherwise. For the real is ever the inexpressible. Paul's experience after all may not have been so extraordinary as is generally supposed.

> I know a man in Christ, some fourteen years ago —whether in the body or out of it, I know not; God knows—who was caught up to the third heaven. I know such a one, I say—whether in the body or out, God only knows—who was carried away to Paradise, and there heard things unspeakable, such as no man can utter.[1]

We may dismiss his Rabbinic conceptions of the unseen world, but may none the less affirm that in the lives of the saints there are, quite possibly, every day realities of experience which are too deep, too high, too gracious, too divine, to be poured into the cold, hard mould of modern scientific psychology.

(3) One great service, however, modern scrutiny does render to genuine Christian experience. It puts a most wholesome check upon the imitations of it which ever tend, with mushroom growth, to spring up around it. Rather might one say, with toadstool growth; for the noxiousness of these developments of pietism and fanaticism is equal to their rapid luxuriance. It is not a case in which imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. For there is no genuine likeness between the false and the true. The vagaries of unchecked religious emotionalism need not here be catalogued. Dr. Maldwyn Hughes has summarized the whole case sufficiently for our purpose.

[1] 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, 4.

> The Christian argument from experience, as sometimes stated, is not free from peril. It lapses into a defence of subjective emotionalism and irrational mysticism, unless we bring the experience continually under the review of our reason as this is illumined by the Spirit of God, and at the same time keep steadily in mind its relation to the historic facts of the Gospel.[1]

If it does sometimes appear that modern scrutiny comes to the estimate of our deepest Christian feelings, with the air of an anatomist handling his scalpel in the presence of a corpse, we must not forget that there are reasons for cool scepticism. It cannot be denied that from Alexandrian asceticism through all the dark ages, down to the modern Eddyism which masquerades as ' Christian Science '[2] —to say nothing about Thugs, Fakirs, and the like in the East, with Shakers, Mormons, and Millennial Dawners in the West—there have been only too many instances in which the words of Festus to the Apostle[3] have found pitifully true application.

Even in Evangelical circles, instances might be found, with regrettable ease, in which religious emotion, as sincere as uninstructed, has let itself go to serious extremes which have alienated vast numbers of those whom the Church should be most anxious to win for Christ. It is small wonder that in these days—days in which all our ever-developing

[1] *The Chief Corner-stone*, p. 269.

[2] For the justification of this phrase see ' *Eddyism—a Delusion and a Snare*, by the present writer (Kelly), where facts and reasons for it are supplied.

[3] Acts xxvi. 24.

educational processes make us shrink from the coarser realism of our fathers—the modern mind should be much more repelled than drawn to Christian realities by the ceaseless reiteration of references to ' the blood ' of Christ in hymns and sermons and Christian appeals. There is no more real need for it than there is to insist upon perpetuating ' the bowels of Jesus Christ,' instead of accepting thankfully the Revised Version's putting of ' the tender mercies of Christ.' [1] In most cases, at all events, the Christian reality which to-day calls for would be far better served if speakers, and singers, and congregations, were to be content to refer with thoughtful and tender reverence to ' the death of Christ.'

Very many believers, one is well aware, will think of such suggestions as mere concessions to heartless intellectuality. But all modern thought—in which their children are being trained—is against them.

[1] To be often talking or singing about ' the cleansing blood,' or applying the blood,' may represent a genuine phase of Christian experience for a certain type of mind—mystical or emotional—but it is definitely repellent to an increasing number of hearers and worshippers. Of course, it can be quite justified by literal quotation from the New Testament, and from many hymn-books. But Christian doctrine must not be taken from hymn-books; and there is no gain—rather is there actual loss—to the Christian reality which these our days demand, in simply repeating the figurative phraseology of the Gospels and Epistles, or the Levitical realisms of the Old Testament—the first chapter of Isaiah is sufficient comment upon these. The resistless advance of knowledge and the frightful tragedies of war combine to make ' blood,' to modern ears and thoughts, a repulsive, concrete notion, rather than a sublime and tender suggestion of holiness and love to the uttermost. Many hymns might here be quoted which doubtless suit the mood of advanced mystics or those who are content with unconsidered emotion, but it is certain that the employment of such language in modern promiscuous audiences, or amongst our young people, is definitely harmful to Christian faith. If it does not actually repel, it tends seriously to bring to pass that religious unreality which constitutes the worst heresy.

Life is no less real for being disciplined ; and love is no less precious for being refined. Emotion, especially in religion, is a splendid servant, but a woful master. And modern thought is not only quite within its rights in demanding that the claims and assertions of pious devotees should be subjected to all the tests of reason, but it is rendering to Christian reality inestimable service, in insisting that the rank weeds of ignorance and superstition, sensationalism and fanaticism, should to the utmost possible be all pruned away. For only so, from the soul's true development in the warmth and brightness of the love of God in Jesus Christ, will there grow all those fruits of righteousness which are so sorely needed for the present stage of civilization.

(4) One other element in the modern atmosphere has to be borne in mind, as regards internal Christian reality. It is far too late in the day to suggest, let alone assume, that all the learning or goodness of the human world is inside the churches. It would be sheer falsity to deny that for moral uprightness, as well as intellectual development, there are myriads of men in the Europe of to-day who have nothing to do with church life, and little or no sympathy with those distinctive principles which cannot but enter into Christian reality. Comparison between the character and influence of such men and the characteristic features of ordinary Christian living is simply inevitable. Whether it be put raucously or courteously, the *cui bono* of Christian devotion is bound to make itself heard in modern discussions. Especially now that we stand apparently upon the brink of the greatest social as well as political readjustments that

civilization has ever encountered. In tones of unmistakable plainness the question has to be faced—Is Christianity really necessary for the future welfare of mankind? Does the world of mankind, after all, need for its regeneration the specific dynamic which is claimed for genuine Christian experience? The opponents of Christianity put their case with unquestionable force. The popular advocacy of unfaith—far more influential than ordinary churches acknowledge—is finding increasing expression after this fashion :—

> I submit that Christianity does not make men lead better lives than others lead who are not Christians.
>
> I suggest that consolation, and fortitude, and cheerfulness, and loving kindness are not in the exclusive gift of the Christian religion, but may be found by good men in all religions.
>
> You speak of the spiritual value of your religion. What can it give you more than Socrates or Buddha possessed? These men had wisdom, courage, fortitude, love, mercy. Can you find in all the world to-day two men as wise, as good, as gentle, as happy? Yet these men died centuries before Christ was born.[1]

Such a challenge may be ignored by Christianity's professional teachers : but the people do not forget it. Modern Universities echo it quite as definitely as men of business, or the typical 'man in the street.' The vast numbers outside the churches—four-fifths of the whole population—are not disposed to persecute Christians ; nor does opposition to

[1] *God and My Neighbour*, R. Blatchford, p. 171.

Christianity now find expression in coarse abuse. But the choke-damp in our mines is even more deadly often than the explosion, and the Kingdom of Christ on earth has much more to fear from spiritual inertia than from persecution. Is the Christian ideal a necessity for mankind, or merely the ethical peculiarity of an esoteric society? That is the question—not of the future but of the present day. As Professor Burkitt puts it, 'The churches have to convince the modern world that they stand for something that it cannot do without.' Professing Christians, of course, avow, alike by their assertions and general attitude, that they do represent precisely that necessity for human hope. The actuality of Christian experience, they say, with all that flows from it, is the only panacea for the woes and wrongs of civilization. But modern thought remains largely unconvinced. Its general reply is, 'Not proven.' It remains, then, for all who really 'have tasted that the Lord is gracious,' to contribute their share of living witness to that response on which, undoubtedly, the future of the human race immeasurably depends.

IX

EPILOGUE

The thought of the Church is not stationary. It is learning little by little to apprehend more fully what is 'the mind of Christ.' Centuries may not complete the process. The end is not yet in sight. But it is not in doubt.—*The Attitude of the Church Towards War*, BISHOP RYLE, p. 32.

It used to be preached that the saved were very few, that the elect were but a little flock, and the great majority of the race were doomed to everlasting misery. Did this gloomy prospect make men better? It startled some, no doubt, and stirred them to flee from the wrath to come; but by its very incredibility it killed all faith in many people. Others it depressed and disheartened; and to some it became a matter of mockery. We have not conquered the world by our doctrine of despair. Let us now try the doctrine of hope. I believe this will succeed. Such triumphs as we have gained have been gained by the hope of the Gospel. And now the darkness is passing, and the true light is already shining. That true light is destined to increase and spread until the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.—*Man the Glory of God*, REV. S. T. BOSWARD, p. 180.

In short, a race is to appear, so Nietzsche and others would have us believe, that is to try the experiment of life wholly on the lines of what is called 'modern thought,' and wholly without faith in God or a world to come. I do not think the growing Nietzsche cult will last long, or in the end do harm. If the terrible experiment must be made, we may safely anticipate the result; it will be Hobbes's state of nature over again; till the world retraces its steps.—*Realm of Ends*, DR. JAMES WARD, p. 451.

The world is God's self-limitation—self-renunciation, might we venture to say? And so God is love. And what must that world be that is worthy of such love? The only worthy object of love is just love; it must, then, be a world that can love God. But love is free; in a ready-made world, then, it could have no place. Only as we learn to know God do we learn to love Him; hence the long and painful discipline of evolution, with its dying to live—the converse process to incarnation—the putting off the earthly for the likeness of God. In such a realm of ends we trust 'that God is love indeed, and love creation's final law.' We cannot live or move without faith, that is clear. Is it not, then, rational to believe in the best, we ask, and can there be a better?—Ibid., p. 453.

IX

EPILOGUE

A PAINFUL sense of failure cannot but follow on so brief an attempt as the foregoing, to summarize a theme so complex and far-reaching. Partly with a view to mitigate that regret, and partly in order to emphasize by means of repetition, these pages may conclude with all possible stress on half a dozen main considerations which merit earnest attention.

(1) If all that Christian reality connotes is to be maintained, let alone developed, on a world-wide scale, the rational demands of the present age in regard to faith's assertions and assumptions must be frankly met. That this is no mere private 'apologetic' fancy, might be abundantly shown from the main principles of the New Testament, as well as from the deliberately expressed convictions of many of their ablest living exponents. Of the latter, let us take, for the sake of their witness, three fair representatives.

In his thoughtful volume on *Jesus and the Gospel* Dr. Denney writes :—

> In spite of all their responsibilities and obligations to the past—in spite of the duty incumbent on them to conserve its intellectual as well as moral attainments—the pressure put upon the churches, both from without and from within, to recognize

the claims of intellectual liberty, is rapidly becoming irresistible. Christian people who are consciously at one in their attitude to Christ, and in their sense of obligation to Him, see that they are kept in different communions and incapacitated from co-operation in work and worship, because they have inherited different theological traditions to which they are assumed to be bound. For the sake of getting nearer to those who share this allegiance, they contemplate with more than equanimity the slackening or dissolution of the bonds which attach them to the theology, or, if we prefer to call it so, the Christian thought, of the past.

Internal pressure of this kind is reinforced from without. In every country in Christendom the nation has outgrown the Church, or has to a large extent passed from beneath its influence. Even of those who retain connexion with it, frequenting its worship and formally supporting it before the world, vast numbers are mentally in that strained relation to it which has just been described. . . . It is certain that readjustments must be made, before those who have been alienated can be won again.[1]

It is faith which makes a Christian, and when the Christian attitude of the soul to Christ is found, it must be free to raise its own problems and to work out its own solutions. There is nothing more certain than that the distinction between faith and inherited forms of doctrine which have been unreflectingly identified with it must be recognized, if evangelical Christians are to maintain their intellectual integrity and preach the Gospel in a world which is intellectually free.[2]

[1] p. 389. [2] p. 383.

This from the 'orthodox' standpoint. Whilst from that of modern science, the veteran Dr. T. G. Bonney, ex-President of the British Association, frankly declares that—

> Ecclesiastics in future, if they would maintain that influence which they ought to exercise in their own sphere, must frankly admit past mistakes and abstain from assuming that any gift of the Spirit, whether in ordination or otherwise, will qualify them to speak dogmatically on questions which not only are difficult in themselves, but also require a special training; or from entertaining the delusive hope that the goodness of their intentions will save them from harmful errors. Facts, we must all remember, are very stubborn things. The priest, or other minister of religion, may hope and believe that if he complies with the conditions under which all men, whether clergy or laity, must work, a special blessing will attend his efforts; he may speak with the confidence of an expert on theological questions, provided he has carefully studied them; but on those which lie outside his range of knowledge he has neither power nor right to claim any authority, or to pronounce a decision, in a matter which he has not investigated.[1]

Professor Kirsopp Lake has, therefore, put the case quite mildly when he says that—

> The suggestion that Christianity is at the cross-roads implies the indictment that there is a danger that its theology is not taking sufficient note of the growth of knowledge, and the changing attitude of thinking men to the problems of thought, so

[1] *Relations of Science and Religion*, Dr. T. G. Bonney, F.R.S., p. 206.

that it is becoming the repetition of shibboleths rather than the expression of experience.[1]

However gently and carefully it may be expressed, the plain and serious truth is that, on the whole, the churches are only partially, grudgingly, and unsatisfactorily, meeting this demand for necessary readjustment. In the Romish and 'High' Anglican Churches, the policy of ignoring the modern knowledge which is no longer questionable is still maintained. So long as services are numerously attended, and ritual conventions observed, the truth or falsity of the doctrines upon which these all rest seems to be regarded as not needing any fresh consideration. In the Evangelical Churches also, there are not wanting teachers, often occupying influential pulpits, who make it a pious boast that they repudiate modern knowledge *in toto*; and do not hesitate to denounce it as a 'downgrade' tendency, if not also a sure sign of the approaching end of the world. Their well-meant but misleading protests, however, do not alter facts. The truth cannot be stifled; and as long as Christianity is worth a moment's regard, it will have to comply with the Apostolic exhortation, and take into fullest account 'whatsoever things are true.'

(2) Opposition to Christian principles will have to be more frankly and generally met. Mr. Talbot, of Balliol, Oxford, has put much truth into two small sentences hereupon.

> In fact, the change from genuinely Victorian times to to-day is a change from the reliance upon to the criticism of assumptions.

[1] *The Stewardship of Faith*, p. 2.

> The moral philosopher, therefore, may, if he likes, sit in his own room composing ethical treatises, but meanwhile the whole house is on fire.[1]

His picture is only too true to life, not only as to the studies of individual preachers, but the Conferences and Congresses of churches, where all kinds of topics are largely discussed, except the very questions which, as a matter of absolute fact, are rankling in the minds of myriads of those who surround the churches, but never enter into them. Hereupon Mr. Drawbridge—mentioned above as having had long experience and possessing thorough knowledge—speaks both plainly and truly in words which are as deserving of utmost attention as they are fairly sure of not getting it.

> It is a fatal mistake to entertain the fallacy that in order to refute the numerous specious arguments put forward by those who emphatically do not believe the most fundamental tenets of theism, and who confidently deny our most axiomatic premisses, the best method is to meet their contention with contemptuous silence, on the ground that they are now out of date, or on the ground that anti-theists must necessarily have reached their negative position as the result either of conspicuous lack of intelligence or else of gross moral turpitude, and that their contentions will soon fall to the ground if we refrain from advertising them by the splendid patronage of refutation. It is certainly fatal to imagine that either vituperation on the one hand, or the studied refusal to consider their arguments or ideals on the other hand, is a wise and adequate alternative—from their point of view—to sympathy and logical persuasion.[2]

[1] *Foundations*, pp. 4, 12. [2] *Common Objections to Christianity*, p. 10.

The working man, mentioned by this writer, who said at the Church Congress of 1912, 'Your religion touches us fellows no nearer than the moon,' spoke for myriads (*sic*) in this country—and for still greater hosts on the Continent—who are wholly unmoved by ordinary 'preaching,' and are never approached along the only lines by which they can be reached. For the most part these are all ignored, if not also condemned, by the churches. So, year by year, they are being leavened by what Mr. Peile has truly characterized as 'a comparatively small force of active and articulate hostility' which knows well how to make up in quality of propagandism for what it lacks in quantity. As to the extent and influence of the ceaseless intellectual activities of the organized minority of unbelief, not one Christian in a hundred knows anything about it—or cares. But—to speak as plainly as courteously, for the truth's sake—no more false or foolish thing has been said by a good and wise man for many years, than the avowal of Dr. J. A. Hutton at a recent meeting of the Bible Society, to the effect that because of recent war revelations—'The Church will need no apologetic for a hundred years to come.' Such a deliverance will doubtless secure the plaudits of the audience; but it is only a lamentable specimen of the way in which, on such occasions, even good men are led to forsake the truth for the sake of an epigram. On the contrary, it is plain to all save the wilfully blind that the Church will need all the best of its evidential efforts, more and better by far than hitherto, when men have time to think of something else than munitions, and to face all that this wickedest of

wars has meant, and will mean, to humanity for many years to come.

(3) In view of all that is coming to hinder as well as to help true religion, there is great need to recall the enheartening truth as to past ages. In the easy talk about the failure of Christianity as exemplified in the horrors of war, it is too often forgotten that there is another side. The imperfect summary of present-day genuine Christian reality given in the first section above is but a mere fraction of a whole which, as an influence for good, has had no parallel on earth. Nothing, of course, is easier than to describe in lurid language the mistakes and follies and wrongs of the Middle Ages. The New Testament condemns them all far more definitely and thoroughly than any 'Rationalist' critic can do. But there is another side. The words of Lord Morley above quoted[1] are true beyond contradiction. And Mr. Lecky is certainly an impartial witness when he writes that—

> The history of self-sacrifice during the last eighteen hundred years has been mainly the action of Christianity upon the world.[2]

Dean Henson makes, indeed, a bold claim, but it may be taken seriously, and certainly justified within the realm of Christian reality, whatever may be laid to the charge of mere professions of faith :—

> So we meet the objection against the religion of Christ, which is based on the moral defects of Christian history, by pointing out that the religion

[1] See p. 171 above. [2] *Rationalism in Europe*, p. 135.

of Christ has not been the only factor in the process of social development; that when it is seriously attempted to disentangle the different constituents of civilization, as we know it, and to identify the specific effects of each one, it is found that exactly the best things are traceable to Christ's religion, and the worst things are clearly derived from other sources.[1]

If this avowal had needed overwhelming illustration, the damnable deeds of German 'frightfulness' during this awful War would have supplied it in ghastly measure. The worst we have had to witness has sprung, we know well, not from following Christ, but from 'crucifying Him afresh, and putting Him to an open shame.' In that sense Dr. Hutton is right, that 'in 1914 the natives of Europe, living by their own philosophies, completely broke down.'

Only there is more, much more, to be added. Such a break-down is no novelty. It has always been so. History is the sufficient witness to that. The philosophy which will not break down when incarnate in a nation, and on a Continent, between rival nations, has yet to be developed. When that philosophy comes, the beating heart of it will be found to be Christian reality.[2]

[1] *Notes on Popular Rationalism*, p. 111.

[2] It is as significant as strange that the latest confirmation of this assertion comes, in bizarre fashion, from a most unlikely quarter. After, and indeed in the midst of verbal ravings so wild as sometimes almost to suggest insanity, Mr. Bernard Shaw—confident as ever in his own oracular infallibility—has come to the conclusion that there is something after all in the Christ whom he has so often vilified (e.g. 'If Jesus had been indicted in a modern court, He would have been sent to an asylum),' and that Christianity may be made both real and valuable by being 'practically applied to human affairs by means of

(4) All too well we know that, on the large scale, Christian reality has not yet arrived. And he would be a bold prophet indeed who would venture to predict that this century will witness its arrival. As for those good folk who seek to comfort themselves, and cheer or warn others, by their predictions of a rapidly approaching cataclysmic Second Coming of Christ, doubtless they will only learn their error, as did the first Christians, by the passing of the years. Whether they will take their lesson as patiently and wisely as Paul took his, when he wrote his second letter to the Thessalonians to correct the first, must be left to the unknown future. All that we now know is that, as Christian believers and Christian churches,

political devices.' In the Preface to *Androcles and the Lion*, on the prospects of Christianity, he rambles and rages through one hundred and seven pages of his own special conceits which do not here merit attention; but the substance of his findings may be expressed in two or three of his sentences:—'But when, having entirely got rid of Salvationist Christianity, and even contracted a prejudice against Jesus on the score of His involuntary connexion with it, we engage on a purely scientific study of economics, criminology, and biology, we find that our conclusions are practically those of Jesus. . . . The moneyed, respectable, capable world has been steadily anti-Christian and Barrabesque since the Crucifixion; and the specific doctrine of Jesus has not in all that time been put into political or social practice. I am no more a Christian than Pilate was, or you, gentle reader; and yet, like Pilate, I greatly prefer Jesus to Annas and Caiaphas; and I am ready to admit that, after contemplating the world and human nature for nearly sixty years, I see no way out of the world's misery but the way which would have been found by Christ's will, if He had undertaken the work of a modern practical statesman.' We are under no obligation whatever either to regard Mr. Shaw's estimate of Jesus, or to accept his notions of Christianity. But it is certainly noteworthy that from out the midst of what so impartial a journal as the *Clarion* calls 'his reckless, anarchical, fate-defying, and dare-devil indulgence in flesh-creeping split infinitives,' there should issue an appeal for a return to the real and practical application of the main principles of Jesus to the political and social problems of to-day.

we are passing through a period of transition, more fraught with momentous issues than any preceding period in our faith's whole history. It would be easy to point to the multitudinous evidences of this transition, in every realm of human life. But it will be briefest and possibly most convincing if again we listen to well-qualified teachers, in addition to what has been advanced in the foregoing pages. With tragic truthfulness Mr. Talbot reminds us of the more ominous portents of the world-movement in which we are concerned.

> The insecurity of the Christian situation reaches down to the foundations not only of Victorian assumptions, but of the Christian religion.
>
> Revolt has gone deeper than merely rejecting the seemingly irrelevancies of Christian dogma. It has undermined and shaken the ancient strongholds of belief in God and man. It has rounded upon a civilization, the practical manifestations of whose supposed assent to the essentials of religion, is an industrial order which denies God and prostitutes man. At the hands of men who in their best moments desire above all things to look into the dark and face the worst, the surviving properties of the last two centuries, whether in religion or in morals, are in course of disruption. Once more it is being realized, and for the first time for many generations in England, of what strange and terrible elements the world is made, and how dread a laboratory of good and evil is in the heart of man.[1]

[1] *Foundations*, p. 17. Should the reader desire any confirmation of this estimate, more especially of the awful possibilities of evil under the veneer of civilization, he has only to procure Mr. Halsalle's volume, just now issued, upon *Degenerate Germany*. Taken from reliable sources—indeed, mostly from their own publications—this exhibition

Lest we should be burdened overmuch with doubts and fears, let us, however, pay good heed to what Dr. Workman suggests.

> We live in a new age with new ideas surging up around us. To live in the past, to cling to formulas that perhaps have lost their meaning, is as impossible as it is valueless. But Jesus Christ is the same to-day as for our fathers; and by the guidance of His Spirit we may step out fearlessly into the uncertainties, assured that He will lead us into all truth, provided always that we keep a firm hold upon the great certainty of His presence. Where there is life and love, there can be no abiding doubt, no real uncertainty; what may seem doubt or uncertainty is but a transient though painful phase of adjustment in the progress of life.[1]

The final word, which should both prepare us for the pain of unlearning some things that have been precious, and move us to the effort of learning that which will be found to be yet more precious, may well be the Master's to the first disciples.

of German 'frightfulness' is more frightful, in very deed, than any of their abominable villanies which this War has witnessed. It is, indeed, in its calm exposure of undeniable facts of moral corruption, so staggering as to overcome even one's burning indignation at the shameless atrocities, with the sense of unutterable pity. To think that a great nation can be found wallowing in such a stye of immorality and iniquity, whilst professing religion, and boasting of its 'kultur,' is enough to make angels weep for sheer despair. Of a truth, the problems of the future which call for Christian reality have never before been so vast, so intricate, and so tremendous, as they are at the present time.

[1] *The Chief Corner-stone*, p. 198.

Have you understood all these things? They answered, Yes. So then He added, That is how every disciple who has been rightly trained for the Kingdom of Heaven, is like a man who has charge of a household, and brings for them out of his stores both new things and old.[1]

(5) There need be, there must be, no hesitation in acknowledging the comparative failure of Christianity, as we now know it. If the reader has not already considered it, probably no better statement of the whole situation from the standpoint of a gentle yet fearless, honest yet courteous, expression of Christian reality can be found in print than the Bampton Lectures, so often—for that very reason—referred to above, delivered in 1907 by Mr. J. H. F. Peile. It is not too much to say that if the modern Christian world could but be brought to view the coming responsibilities in the spirit exhibited on those pages, there would be more hope for Christendom than comes from any other source. To it, therefore, the reader may be referred, in place of further descriptions here.

The indictment—reproach for failure—is a serious one, especially from an Anglican clergyman. But there is lamentable truth in it; and the first duty as well as highest wisdom of all Christians who deserve the name is to face the failures honestly, so that they may be turned into truest success. At least this must be said without flinching, that if Christianity has been shown to be a comparative failure, certainly the philosophy which rejects Him has proved itself to be a complete and ghastly failure. How

[1] Matt. xiii. 52.

near, in spirit and in deed, the co-operations of the Allied nations will come to Christian reality, we dare not yet predict. But of one thing, thank God, we are sure, viz. that not only they, but the rest of human kind, have had enough of the gospel according to Nietzsche. Bismarck, Treitschke, Chamberlain, Bernhardi, Harden, Tirpitz, and the sinister host around the Kaiser and his son, have had their day, and they will cease to be, along with the brute policy which they have sought to fetter upon civilization. Nietzsche has now far more need than Julian to cry—'O Galilean, Thou hast conquered.'

(6) The question of the outlook alone remains. How is comparative failure to be turned into noble triumph? How, for poor humanity's sake, is Christian reality to be so reinforced throughout the modern world, as not only to yield sure guarantee against any recurrence of the curse of war, but bring to pass the justice and peace and joy which embody the will of God for all this world of His? If we reply, deliberately and earnestly, that what is wanted is more Christian reality, it behoves us at least to suggest what is intended by the 'more.' That may be done in few words—because many words would not help it. Its significance lies in three directions. The Christian hope of the future is dependent on these three developments. Let reality in Christian experience be taken to mean what is outlined above, the outlook is bright or dark, in the degree in which this internal reality is at once more general, more manifest, and more intense.

(i.) It was a noble tribute to the spirit of Moses

when, trampling on all jealousy, he cried—'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!'[1] There is no Christian longing that calls more for prayerful expression to-day than that which such words may serve to express. There are, happily, numbers of genuine saints in our modern midst—more than ever before—who incarnate the mind of Jesus Christ, and, as Seeley put it, by their 'mere presence' shame the bad and make the good better. But comparatively they are few. The need of the hour is that *all* professing Christians should be real. For only out of reality can the gracious influence emanate which is to fulfil Christ's own ideal—'Ye are the salt of the earth—the light of the world.' That all Christians are not such, every one knows only too well. Why not? Why does a lamp give only a feeble light, but because of a poor current passing through its filaments? The fire warms little which has in it neither flame nor glow. Even so is it for want of illuminating convictions and burning emotion within, that reality in Christian profession so often lacks its proper and effective outer witness. Amidst, perhaps, many excellences, the one thing that such adherents or members of churches cannot say is—'I know Him whom I have believed.' But without that knowledge, the Christian religion is as unreal as a circle without a centre.

(ii.) We are not each other's judges, so that whenever the above avowal is definitely made, we must credit its utterer with sincerity. But such a claim can never in itself satisfy either man or God. 'Not

[1] Num. xi. 29.

every one who says . . . but only he who does.' 'Blessed are ye if ye do'—that, we know well, is Christ's test. But the all-embracing thoroughness of its application to human affairs is too often forgotten—or ignored. The name 'Christian' ought, on such a principle, to be an absolute guarantee, in every walk in life, for all that the Apostle declared to be 'the fruit of the Spirit,' and all that in his final plea he bade the Philippians earnestly consider.[1] 'He is a Christian' ought to be assurance, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that in dealing with that man, nothing mean, selfish, unworthy, unkind, untrue, need ever be for a moment feared. The old martyr cry—'*Christianus sum*'—'I am a Christian'—ought still to be pledge to all the world, more reliable than any judicial oath or government bond, that from him or her who so avows, nothing but truth and honour, unselfishness and compassion, sweetness and light, can ever emanate in human intercourse. Alas, if the truth must be told, we know that it is far from being so. All too often the voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. There are very few among us who have not reason to hide our faces when the Master says to us, as tenderly as probingly, 'Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?'

(iii.) The remedy for all this, whether in matters great or small, is not in the increase of any pressure from without, but the intensification of reality within. For some strange reason the new Methodist hymn-book omits a prayer in the former edition,

[1] Phil. iv. 8.

which surely expresses the truth herein as forcefully as simply :—

> What! never speak one evil word,
> Or rash, or idle, or unkind?
> O how shall I, most gracious Lord,
> This mark of true perfection find?
>
> Thy sinless mind in me reveal.
> The Spirit's plenitude impart.
> And all my spotless life shall tell
> The obedience of a loving heart.

If that is not the utterance of Christian reality in the closest intercourse of daily life, what is? Verily if so, in thought and word, Christian men and women were true to their Lord, there would be small room for anxiety as to their deeds. Nor is there any doubt that hallowed homes would mean also purified businesses, and would open the door for the ennoblement of all civic relations, so pointing the way to national honour and international peace. But even as we think of this, there comes a sigh of something like despair. Observation, honest acknowledgement, irrepressible memories, combine to suggest to us that it is but a ' counsel of perfection,' to which human nature cannot attain. Here is where the word of Jesus, made clear above, so definitely and surely applies. ' With human influences only—impossible. But close to God—all possible.' And the Apostle was no hypocrite, we know, when he claimed to have proved it. ' I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.' Whatever cynical unbelief may find therein to repudiate, whatever superficial profession of faith may plead as excuse for its impracticability, whether

it be called Mysticism or anything else, that is the only Christian way. Power from within, not pressure from without, is the only condition of that visible, tangible evidence of divine truth and love in human lives which is yet to move the world.

Platitudes concerning prayer may be heaped up in vain. But real communion with God, as brought into our very souls by Jesus Christ, is as surely and inalienably the condition of the veritable Christian character in all human intercourse, as the inbreathing of pure air, with all that accompanies it, is the condition of a healthy life on the physical plane.

Finally, it is to be especially noted that by the foregoing is connoted not the extraordinary but the ordinary Christian panacea. The ancient words of Scripture have often a wonderfully apt application to modern Christian affairs. How utterly here, for instance, does the wise remonstrance of Naaman's sensible as well as sympathizing servants, come home to us!

> My father, if the prophet had bidden thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith to thee—Wash, and be clean!

If we were called upon, in view of an immediate spectacular coming of Christ, to proceed to the extremes to which the first disciples went under that very impression, there can be little doubt that multitudes would do again as they then did—give up their businesses, sell all their possessions, dismiss

all other considerations, so as to meet their Lord. The hope of salvation by revolution seems to be humanly ineradicable.

Yet everything, around and within us, everything in history as in science, conspires to tell us that such is not God's way. 'The kingdom of God does not come as a flash to be watched for.' Evolution, not revolution, is unmistakably the only hope of the future, as well as the only process now actually going on. In spite of all our words and deeds, our theological contentions, and our political upheavals, it is a spiritual evolution, now actually proceeding, which gives us our only valid hope for humanity. To that, all our irresistible evolution of doctrine is contributing. To that, above all else, the evolution of Christian reality in personal character may contribute. Call it mysticism, call it holiness, call it devotion, call it what we will, it is the ordinary perpetual, inexpressible, but real communing of each human soul with the living Christ, in the hidden world of common daily consciousness, which yields alone the possibility and the power of such external Christian reality as can regenerate modern humanity.

In his noteworthy book Mr. Benjamin Kidd tells of the coming of 'a new democracy' which is to be

> the crowning result of an ethical movement, in which qualities and attributes which we have been taught all to regard as the very highest of which human nature is capable, find the completest expression they have ever reached in the history of the race.[1]

[1] *Social Evolution*, p. 329.

Be it so. Yet with all appreciation of such an estimate,[1] and the hope it suggests, if Christ be true, His followers are bound to say—as did Geraint to Edyrn, son of Nudd[2]—'Forbear, there is a worthier.' For the 'Kingdom of Heaven' of which Christ Himself is at once both pledge and King, includes all the indubitable good which would come with the ethical result embodied in the 'new democracy'—and a great deal more. There are lengths, and breadths, and depths, and heights, of human blessedness connoted by Christian reality, alike for this world and a better world to come, of which such ethical results as Mr. Kidd contemplates know nothing. 'If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them,' is an assurance and a promise of unmeasured good which find no parallel amidst the philosophies of men who know not Christ nor heed His message. In face of all the awful happenings of the last two years, it is not too much to say that ethics, not only Nietzsche's, but all else as represented in civilization's unchristian or anti-Christian philosophies, have been weighed in the balances and found wanting. It is they, not Christianity, which have been on their trial during the last century. And they have proved themselves neither good enough, nor strong enough, for the restraining of the human beast, or the guidance

[1] If any reader is inclined to question it, let him study the history of Europe during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, and compare it with what we have to-day. Even war's outburst of hell cannot blind us to the hopeful contrast. Moreover, the very devilries of Germany are causing such moral disgust and indignation as the world has never before evinced—a sure sign that the horror is a passing storm which will be followed by a bluer sky.

[2] In Tennyson's *Geraint and Enid*.

of the human brain, or the governance of the human heart.

It is the almost appalling but inevitable claim of Christ's Gospel, that it alone is equal to so colossal a triple task. One thing, however, is definitely needed to make good the claim, and that is Christian reality. Real Christianity, on the necessary scale, has never yet been tried. The hope of the human future is that it will be tried. For in the degree in which it is real, Christianity will not fail. Everything turns upon that complex, indescribable, but unmistakable reality. We can no more put it into verbal formulae than imprison the sunshine in a box. We can but note its unalterable idiosyncrasies. Real Christianity must ever be something other than ecclesiastical bigotry. It has no place in all its realm for sacerdotal tyranny; nor for the mechanical shibboleths of orthodoxy; nor for the misleading conceits of Bibliolatry. Personal selfishness is as far from its significance as social snobbery. To speak positively, it is real not only in always 'practising the presence of God,' but of *the* 'God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' For which reason it reverently transcends the ten specific words associated with Moses, as distinctly as the child passes beyond the multiplied negatives of the nursery into the fewer but all-embracing positives of adult filial devotion. It bows with trembling awe before Christ's own broadened and intensified Two Commands. It cries a heartfelt Amen to the Apostolic dictum :—

> For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is

summed up in this word, Thou shalt love thy fellow man as thou lovest thyself. Love works no ill to his fellow man; love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law.[1]

This, not the 'Ten Commandments,' it would write, together with the 'Beatitudes' of Jesus, both on the walls of its sanctuaries and on the tablets of the human heart. Thus Christian reality trembles introspectively before the 'Holy of Holies' which is enshrined in the First Great Command, whilst extrospectively it looks about everywhere for opportunity to prove the brotherhood of men which the Fatherhood of God involves. In regard to both these great injunctions it declares, with all possible emphasis, that what God hath thus joined together, no man, no church, can ever have any right to put asunder. And when the sense of imperfection and comparative failure becomes, as it sometimes must, almost overwhelming, Christian reality calls to mind the Master's own assurance for the present—'Remember, I am always with you,' as well as the blessed hope that can never fail, which lights up the farthest future when all other comfort ceases —'Believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many abodes of rest and peace.' Full well we know that His peace is as far from selfish, mawkish soul-inertia, as the living brightness of a summer morning is from the deadly cold of an Arctic winter.

Such Christian reality, in all that it creates and perpetuates within, inseparably blended with all that it brings to pass without, is the Kingdom of Heaven which Jesus came to establish. It constitutes

[1] Rom. xiii. 9, 10.

the 'eternal life' which is so immeasurably more than everlasting existence. It alone provides the working substance of ideals and the guarantee of hopes, without which, soberly and deliberately it may be said, all humanity's boasts of civilization, and science, and literature, and art, are but the mocking mirage of a weary desert, the troubled fancies of a feverish dream.

In one word, Christian reality, on the world-scale, no less than in the individual human heart, is the full and abiding appreciation and reciprocation of the Gospel's greatest word, so often quoted, so little apprehended, 'God is love.'

Whatever, therefore, becomes of the forms and customs, the shibboleths of creed and differences in organization, which yet divide the Christian churches of to-day, we may live in hope of the time when, with one great song of harmony in which many parts will be richly blended, they will all combine to make one clear, deep, tender, mighty appeal to humanity.

O believe the record true.
God to you His Son hath given.
Ye may now be happy too,
Find in earth the life of heaven.
Live the life of heaven above,
All the life of glorious love.

This the universal bliss,
Bliss for every soul designed.
God's original promise this,
God's great gift to all mankind.
Blest in Christ this moment be,
Blest to all eternity.

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